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### ***Editorial Note***

The Editorial Board is proud to announce that, starting with Volume 53 to be published during 2004, ***Sociological Bulletin (SB)*** will be issued thrice a year January–April, May–August and September–December

***SB*** is a peer-refereed journal. As an established convention, it publishes articles and book reviews strictly in the chronological order in which they are received in their accepted version by the Editorial Office. The instant issue carries articles and book reviews received up to 16 June 2003 and 10 October 2003 respectively. As a matter of policy, ***SB*** does not publish unsolicited book reviews. Scholars desirous of reviewing books for the journal may write to the Managing Editor mentioning the area(s) of their interest. ***SB*** welcomes discussion on the articles published in its pages.

***Managing Editor***

## **Social Policy Concerns in Indian Sociology**

***D.N. Dhanagare***

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Like any other humanistic and scientific discipline, sociology (including social anthropology) has carved out its niche during the last eighty-five years or so of its institutionalised existence in Indian academia. It has gone through the ups and downs as, during this period, it has experienced flourishing creativity and has achieved professional recognition on the one hand, but has also witnessed some spells of slackness and complacency on the other. Notwithstanding these vicissitudes, sociology in India has maintained a respectable profile in terms of its academic credibility within social science scholarship, even at the international level. Comparisons can at times be misleading, however, it would be least risky to say that the discipline has acquired more or less the same stature as a body of knowledge, as economics and history have. The relative ranking of these disciplines apart, it needs to be noted that these three disciplines have not only influenced each other, but have also served as role models for each other in one respect or the other.

Even so, discussions on 'relevance of the discipline' (to the society in general and/or to national policy for development in particular) have taken place in Indian sociology more frequently than they have in any other sister discipline (see Mukherjee 1974: 171-72, Y. Singh 1984: 127-45, Dhanagare 1998: 182-201). Such discussions, which have streaks of introspection, prompt us to ask whether, as a body of knowledge, Indian sociology has proved its utility for the society and whether we are really justifying our role in society. Relationship between sociology and social policy is a theme that offers us an opportunity to assess the social utility of the discipline—the theme that we keep returning to repeatedly. In a sense, the choice of the general theme of this Conference is predicated by the question 'whether accumulation of facts, their analysis and theorising, that is, generating knowledge about social reality is adequate for sociology, or whether the relevance of sociological knowledge has to have an endorsement by administrative and political elites who usually author statements of social policy?' In other words, a discussion on the relevance of sociology to social policy involves self-questioning whether we ought to seek a nod of approval from the state and its functionaries.



Here I propose to trace social policy concerns in Indian sociology, to find out the views some leading Indian sociologists held on the relationship between sociology and social policy, the extent to which they were engaged in social policy issues, and their contribution to policy making. It would also be worthwhile to know whether at least a cross section of Indian sociologists was called upon to participate in policy making exercises and in programme implementation, monitoring and performance evaluation. Quite a few sociologists have critiqued developmental policies of the state from time to time, that is really not surprising because social criticism is generally understood as a major function of sociology. The attempt here is to identify the modes of responses of Indian sociologists to the growing demands of the state for producing social research relevant to social policy.

Exactly half a century ago Gunnar Myrdal was invited to address the conference of British Sociological Association. While focusing on the relationship between social theory and social policy, he argued that they were not very clearly distinguishable in the first quarter of the 19th century. Rapid, at times traumatic, changes were being wrought by Industrial Revolution, and these in turn were producing upheavals and serious social problems in most European societies that were then passing through the period of transition and Enlightenment. Hence, social sciences were moved by the desire to solve those urgent problems and to improve conditions of society (Myrdal 1953: 210-12). Though social theory and social policy were inseparably intertwined, some tension between the two persisted throughout the development of sociology. On the one hand, as a scientific discipline, sociology/social anthropology had to remain committed to inviolable canons of objectivity and empirical verification of facts. Social theory was supposed to offer universalistic explanation. On the other hand, social policy demanded an unwavering commitment by sociologists to certain social values and value premises. As Myrdal (*Ibid*: 211) has put it, 'The task of social theory is to clarify, by a study of the social facts, how by social policy men and society can be improved'. Social theory, thus, acted as a guide to social policy options, and scientific analysis always provided reasoning as to why one policy option for social intervention was more advantageous than others in given socio-cultural circumstances.

In Europe, social scientists were not called upon to formulate a social policy or to advise on appropriate means of direct intervention as such, even then their influence permeated social policy issues of their times more indirectly than directly. It is noteworthy that

social scientists in Europe were neither the final authors nor the executors of social policy and they never trained civil servants either. Despite the fact that most social scientists found few or no careers outside universities attractive, the demand for social scientists' advice either in business or in framing state policies was growing steadily since the Second World War (*Ibid* 215-16)

Myrdal attributed this growing recognition largely to the rigorous work social scientists produced in social theory and analysis. While it added to their credibility and earned them social approbation, framers and executors of social policy could not have possibly ignored their solid academic contributions. Quintessentially then, the influence of sociologists and other social scientists on social policy is 'ideological' because they work with ideas and facts in tandem and can appeal to people's rationality.

In the backdrop of the relationship between social theory and social policy as it evolved in Europe, it would be quite educative for us to see the nature of this relationship in Indian sociology and find out the extent to which sociologists in India were concerned about social policy. Whether the state and other user agencies have been making any increasing demands on the expertise of Indian sociologists since the 1950s (when the phase of planned development began in Independent India)? If so, what has been their attitudes and modes of responses towards the task of policy making and planning? What has been their contribution to social policy? Finally, it would be equally rewarding for us to assess the long-term impact that engagement of sociologists with social policy had, or is likely to have, on sociology as a substantive, theoretical and academic discipline in India. These questions need to be pursued. The proposed exercise cannot be exhaustive, nonetheless reviewing the policy concerns of some selected eminent sociologists would be of pertinence to our purpose.

Among Indian social scientists, only economists seem to have ably met the role expectations of the state and contributed to social policy. Particularly since the early 1950s, when the phase of Five Year Plans began, planning within a policy frame was a prerequisite for launching specific welfare or development programmes. The Planning Commission was set up by the Government of India to decide the direction of change, to identify beneficiaries and targets and to fix the quantum of resource allocation commensurate with priority of a given sector. That, in turn, depended on the policy relevance of a sector. The overall thrust of the planning and prioritisation was, no doubt, decided by political leaders and by the bureaucracy—that is, civil servants who have almost always been the *de facto* authors of policy statements. The politicians and civil servants

who managed governance were not totally oblivious of the role that social science research could play in formulating social policies. A Research Programmes Committee (hereafter RPC), set up within the Planning Commission, dispensed funds for social science research. Naturally, economists were the main beneficiaries of this state sponsorship. At least, that was the perception of other social scientists.

Indian economists have undoubtedly made significant contributions to social policy and development planning during the last five decades. C D Deshmukh, D R Gadgil, V K R V Rao, M L Dantawala, Tarlok Singh, K N Raj, Sukhmoy Chakravarty, C H Hanumantha Rao, A M Khusro and Manmohan Singh are some names that come to one's mind readily. Both by training and by inclination an economist gets interested in social policy and planning as naturally and effortlessly as the fish takes to water. Among the leading Indian economists, V K R V Rao had the vision that went far beyond economics. He held the view that, like economics, sociology and other social sciences should have a bearing on policy.

A meaningful social research is one that has certain policy implications, on the basis of one's study of social reality (that is, *what it is*) a social scientist must be able to say what to do about it and then to help shape the society of the future (that is, *what should it be*) (as paraphrased by T Singh 2000 :3)

Like Myrdal, Rao thought that social scientists should indicate policy implications of their researches regardless of whether their policy recommendations are accepted and acted upon or not (*Ibid*). Certainly then Rao never thought that 'social policy' was an exclusive preserve of economists. In fact, he stressed the need to study socio-cultural dimensions of economic development and problems (such as poverty, unemployment, inequitable distribution of landholdings, and so on) by sociologists and anthropologists. One is not sure whether Indian sociologists really shared this view wholeheartedly. Notwithstanding the fact that sociologists and social anthropologists were perhaps next to economists to receive research funds from the RPC, their participation in the making of social policies, barring exceptions, appears to have remained only marginal.

### Detached View of Social Policy

From the very beginning, the purpose of starting sociology in Indian universities—at Bombay and Baroda around 1916-20—was no different from what it was in Europe. The *Indian journal of sociology* was started

in 1920 by its founders to promote 'a balanced, calm, scholarly and healthy approach to social problems' (Shah 1998 128, see also Shah 1972) It was not then envisaged that sociologists would become 'ivory tower theoreticians' and shy away from the tasks of policy making and finding solutions to those problems Sir Patrick Geddes, the founder of the Department of Sociology in the University of Bombay, was deeply interested not only in the study of civic and urban social problems but also in planning for urban development He was quite inclined to involve himself in policy planning A few years after joining the University of Bombay, Geddes was engaged by the Indore Princely State in 1918 to advise the city administration on the layout of Indore city and to prepare a plan for its alternative water-supply and drainage systems to control diseases (Munshi 2000 489-90) Being a human geographer and town planner, Geddes firmly believed that sociology and social policy should go hand in hand Nearly half a century later N K Bose (1968) continued this legacy and had associated himself with development planning of Calcutta city

One of the pioneers of sociology in India was G S Ghurye who truly brought the Sociology Department of the University of Bombay on the radar of international sociology His works on caste and class and on tribes in India have had profound impact on the teaching and research in sociology in Indian universities Ghurye held strong views about castes and especially on India's aboriginals ('the so-called', as he put it) and considered the tribes as the constitutive elements of Indian society since time immemorial His research findings and interpretations on this subject had significant policy implications, as he never wanted tribals to be treated as insulated from the rest of the Indian society<sup>1</sup> However, Ghurye seems to have taken a purely scholastic, detached and somewhat ultra-positivist position vis-à-vis social policy, because he chose to distance himself from both making of social policy and its implementation While commenting on India's tribal problem, he said

The effective solution of the problem lies in strengthening the ties of the tribals with other backward classes through their integration *How such integration may be brought about is a matter of practical administration* The theoretical background can be provided by a brief but integrated account of the social and religious life of the tribals (Ghurye 1973 188, emphasis added)

Obviously, Ghurye drew a sharp distinction between an objective presentation of facts about tribals within a theoretical framework as a *scientific task* and solving the problem of tribal integration with the main-

stream of Indian society as an *administrative measure*. He considered the former as a legitimate arena for the sociologist and social anthropologist, whereas the latter—a policy matter—ought to guide the course of administrative action. It is well known that his polemical views on ‘integration and assimilation of tribal societies with the rest of Indian society’ were quite in opposition to the views of Verrier Elwin who favoured the policy of preserving tribals in India as ‘National Parks’ (*Ibid* 188-89, see also Elwin 1943). Though Ghurye thought that a sociologist had a right to take a position on important social issues, he was reluctant to involve himself directly, or even indirectly, in formulation of social policy or in any social intervention. It is not known whether the central or the state government, or the Planning Commission, ever offered Ghurye an assignment to conduct a policy-oriented sociological study of tribes or castes. However, his disinclination to mix up the role of a social scientist with that of a policy maker was too evident to need any further elaboration.

In three of his many research articles, Ghurye had addressed social issues: ‘Growth of population’, ‘Birth control practice in Bombay’, and ‘Sex habits of middle class people of Bombay’. These were either published or presented at all India conferences between 1925 and 1938. The themes were such that based on first hand survey data that he had collected, Ghurye could have made certain policy recommendations. Still, he refrained from making any such remarks (see *Ibid* 281-315) or suggesting changes in the then existing state policy on population or on sex education. The reasons for Ghurye eschewing any attempt to link his data and interpretation to social policy could be twofold. Either under the influence of the nationalist movement, which permeated academia all over India during the period, he might have thought it futile to make any policy recommendations to alien rulers, or he genuinely believed that the role of the universities and their departments was ‘to maintain civilisation and culture at a high level’ (*Ibid* 122), and, therefore, any indulgence in policy making would be a deviation from the basic mandate of a university teacher. While both may contain an element of truth, the latter seems to be more plausible, because even in the works that Ghurye published after his retirement, except *Social tensions in India* (1968), he never involved himself in social policy as it did not form a part of his professional concern.

### Emerging Policy Concerns

Like Ghurye, Radhakamal Mukerjee, one of the founders of the Lucknow School of Sociology, too had a similar range of diversity of scholastic and

research interests. He wrote on Indian rural economy, land problems, food planning, population and family hygiene, Indian working class and planning for the Indian countryside. Influenced by the spirit of Indian liberation movement, he willingly became a member of the National Planning Committee that was set up by the Indian National Congress under the chairmanship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He also served as an Economic Advisor to the then Princely State of Gwalior and in that capacity had initiated many new developmental programmes (Josh 1986: 1459). To Radhakamal Mukerjee, therefore, social policy was very much a legitimate concern of a sociologist. Some of his policy related ideas and proposals, floated back in the 1930s and 1940s, were subsequently found not only to be relevant but also worth implementation in the post-1952 policy planning process in India. For instance, his idea of imposing a ceiling on landholdings as a measure for social equity became the foundation of the later day land reforms in their second phase all over India, and the same is now widely acknowledged. Similarly, he staunchly advocated family planning and wanted action programmes for control of fertility behaviour to be launched with other welfare programmes for improvement in food security, nutrition, health and literacy. As one can see, today his views have been incorporated in India's family planning and welfare policy. He was 'the first social scientist in India to have emphasised the role of water planning and that of an integrated rural and urban planning under Indian conditions' (*Ibid*). It is only after nearly four decades that state policy planners, politicians and administrators have started realising how prudent and prophetic were his ideas about social policy and planning. Radhakamal Mukerjee, thus, marks a contrast to Ghurye by setting up an ideal role model for sociologists who share policy concerns and want to be closely associated with policy making.

Another important representative of the Lucknow School of Sociology was D P Mukerji. He endorsed close ties between sociology and social policy. In his approach to policy and planning he stressed the importance of integrating economy and culture. For him, planning was not just a technocratic exercise, but essentially a cultural task. Written exactly half a century ago in 1953, his work *Man and plan in India* revealed how in his opinion sociological insights were of cardinal importance to the making of social policy and planning in India. He thought, while introducing new programmes of development, their possible consequences on different social classes, strata and communities have to be taken into account as they are likely to unleash new forces, social processes, tensions and conflicts. This is precisely where he thought the role of sociologists to

be vital, because they alone are equipped to understand and analyse these new social forces and accordingly to provide appropriate input for policy and planning. He was quite 'critical of the state for having conceived India's Five Year Plan document as no more than a technical blueprint and that was totally devoid of understanding of the ongoing social and cultural changes' (*Ibid* 1467). If the Plan document has to reflect people's aspirations, drives and motivations as well as their capacities, then these inputs could be provided much better by social scientists other than economists. His criticism of state's policy and planning apart, D P Mukerji never sought any consultancy assignment from the government, nor did he ever willingly associate himself with formulation of social policy. Nonetheless, his approach to the understanding of cultural and institutional changes in India was significantly relevant for the task of policy making and for development planning.

About the Lucknow School, two things are noteworthy. First, notwithstanding his personal engagement in policy matters and planning exercises Radhakamal Mukerjee, in his writings, seldom vehemently advocated the involvement of sociologists in policy-related activities under state patronage. This may partly be due to the fact that he did not want to mix up his own preferences with what he thought should be priorities of the discipline, partly it might be because, in later years of his career, he became seriously interested in issues of meta-theory and transdisciplinarity. That might explain why academic disciplines of sociology and social anthropology, as they grew in the Lucknow School, by and large preferred to stay at a respectable distance from 'social policy issues' in the post-1952 period. Second, and significantly enough, sociology, social anthropology, social work and economics grew in each other's shadow at the Lucknow University, but only by adhering to the unwritten rules of division of labour. Sociology remained confined to the model of 'pure' theoretical science, whereas 'applied' concerns—policy issues and planning exercises—appeared to have been consigned to social work and economics.

### **From Ambivalence to Active Participation**

Teaching and research activities became established at the University of Delhi in the late 1950s under the leadership of M N Srinivas. His attitude towards the involvement of sociologists in social policy (whether or not sociologists and social anthropologists should work for the state development planning) appears uncertain. Three decades ago, in an exhaustive

survey of the development of sociology, Srinivas and Panini (1973) recorded their appreciation for the Planning Commission and its RPC for having promoted and financed social science research related and relevant to development planning especially for rural India. In this context they have mentioned with gratitude Douglas Ensminger, then Director of the Ford Foundation in India (1951-70), for making sociology popular with the Indian government, and particularly for convincing Jawaharlal Nehru how sociologists and social scientists were indispensable for preparing development policy and planning (*Ibid* 197-98)

It is difficult to say assertively whether Srinivas and Panini wanted sociologists to get increasingly involved in social policy and development planning, though it is certain that they viewed it as an important area that offered considerable career opportunities and future prospects for sociologists. Nonetheless, they envisaged two difficulties that seemed to militate against sociologists getting drawn into policy planning. First,

development policy oriented research tended to restrict a sociologist's freedom of choice of research themes, problems and methodology, because mostly administrators decided what problems had to be studied or surveyed on a priority basis while social scientists were expected only to produce research results almost in a 'made to order' fashion in the ridiculously short span of time. Such sponsored studies could produce nothing but data and results with questionable credibility (*Ibid* 199)

Second, with development efforts being stepped up steadily, the state made increasing demands on sociology, no doubt. However, economists occupied the pride of place among social scientists. By any standard, economics was, and continues to be, the most developed discipline among social sciences, and also the most relevant for social policy and planning. The fact that the lion's share of research funds and official consultancies went to economists resulted in some kind of 'sour grapes reaction' among sociologists and social anthropologists. Even so, in the 1970s, Srinivas and Panini expressed a kind of disenchantment with the state's one-sided commitment to a purely economic approach to development policy and planning and had felt that this itself was preparing a fertile ground for sociologists to highlight the role social, cultural and religious factors played in the process of development. It appears that Srinivas and Panini were then quite optimistic that 'the day was not far off when sociologists and social anthropologists will have a say in plan formulation' (*Ibid*). At the same time, they ventilated feelings of frustration that services of Indian



sociologists and social anthropologists were not being utilised for planning and development purposes (*Ibid* 209)

Two points are noteworthy in the way Srinivas and Panini viewed the relationship between sociology and social policy. First, their attitude to the sociologist's involvement in social policy appears to be ambivalent (or a blend of hope and despair). Second, they did not make any rigorous distinction between 'policy formulation' (that refers to defining goals and values underlying the direction of change and development, that is, articulating the developmental world view and ideology) and 'planning for development' (that implies drawing up specific programmes, fixing tangible targets and time frames and allocating resources). In other words, it is the former that has to guide the latter. However, most sociologists, including Srinivas and Panini, seem to have frequently used the two concepts and phraseologies interchangeably.

The problem of an uneasy relationship between sociologists and social policy in India, therefore, lies at least partly in the divergent ways in which professional sociologists understood 'social policy'. Some scholars tend to equate social policy with 'social welfare policy'. For instance, R N Saksena—a product of the Lucknow School—has argued that ensuring the well-being of groups within society and fulfilling basic needs like food, shelter and security for all the citizens are the most fundamental obligations of the state. A welfare state has to devise ways and means to satisfy these needs and the methods adopted for discharging this most important responsibility of the state constitute the core of social policy (Saksena 1965: 329-30). This notion of social policy is obviously taken from the way the concept was used by organisations like the UNO, ILO and UNICEF in their charters. It is hardly necessary to stress that such a notion of social policy reflected some kind of commodity fetishism—an offshoot of the 'basic needs approach' that was in vogue in the 1950s and 1960s.

It could be argued, however, that a broader perspective on social policy is called for if sociologists are to address substantive policy issues. Within the 'ends and means' framework, the orientation of welfarism can lead us to mistaking the wood for the trees. Social policy ought to be concerned with larger ends and goals implying value premises—such as human freedom, dignity, freedom not just from want and hunger but also from fear (that is, fear of authority, tradition and dogma), freedom from oppression and exploitation, social values of equality (of gender and of opportunity to all citizens without any discrimination), commitment to democracy and secularism and protection of human rights. Once these

basic ingredients of social policy are sorted out, it is easier to work out the specifics of concrete plans and programmes for development

It is correct to say that Indian sociologists and social scientists, other than economists, might have had little or no role in actual drafting of policy statements, or in preparing development schemes. They might have rarely contributed to drafting of a Bill for enactment and seldom functioned as social engineers themselves. Still less perhaps sociologists were called upon to administer an induced social change except when they joined the government outfits, research centres or institutes that were specially set up for direct social intervention. Even when sociologists participate either as authors or as executors of social policy, as Myrdal has pointed out, their influence percolates down through their general studies on development and change, through surveys that they conduct on living conditions among social strata and groups. However, a certain sociological core permeates these studies and surveys. Exposition of sociological ideas, concepts and theories truly constitutes that core. When government bureaucracy deals with welfare administration and it cares to get acquainted with such sociological studies, concepts and theories, it is influenced by sociologists and social scientists, though only occasionally. Moreover, their impact is more indirect than direct (Myrdal 1953: 215).

In the Indian context the relevance of sociological theories and concepts for policy formulation and planning has not been emphasised adequately so far, though some sociologists have made strong pleas for sociologists' participation in social policy issues. In the 1970s, when the Community Development Programme (hereafter CDP) had been more or less consigned to history, an important section of Indian sociologists still considered it as very much a part of their research agenda. Saksena, for example, stressed the need for sociologists based in university departments to associate themselves with CDP and to collaborate with the state-sponsored institutions (like the National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad). According to him, some individual scholars carrying out researches in such institutions for their own sake was not enough. 'What was needed was a balanced and critical evaluation of the motivations and mechanism of change in rural communities together with the analysis of cultural determinants of people's acceptance or rejection of such development programmes' (Saksena 1971: 10-11).<sup>2</sup> He hoped that findings of such balanced studies would prove to be immensely helpful for better policy formulation and planning and also for effective implementation of programmes. One thing is clear here. Saksena remained committed to the idea of 'value free' sociology and felt that it should continue producing

credible research findings relevant to social policy. Like Srinivas, he neither favoured any direct involvement in the making of social policy nor did he envisage any subordinate, instrumental role for sociologist vis-à-vis the government bureaucracy.

In contrast, S C Dube strongly advocated that social scientists, particularly sociologists, should play a meaningful role in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of social policy. He, however, shifted the focus from the 'welfarism paradigm' that enamoured professional social workers then to the 'development paradigm'. Commenting on the predicament of modern man, Dube has attributed the paradox of affluence and poverty, and the problems such as population explosion, environmental pollution, unemployment and alienation of youth, etc. to the blind adoption of the model of technology-driven development and modernisation. Because that model had failed, Dube (1990: 351-53) identified 'management of change' as the most critical issue of our time facing sociologists. He thought that in this grim scenario the role of social scientists is to avert the ultimate calamity. In this context he was critical of that 'small minority of sociologists who liked to cultivate their professional specialties as esoteric art', on the contrary, most sociologists, he thought, were keen to utilise their craft and skills for a social purpose and to play a meaningful role in the smooth transformation of society 'towards new designs for living and preferred future' (*Ibid.* 354). He strongly argued that descriptive surveys and diagnostic studies have been influencing social policy directly and indirectly, though in reality this was only partially true. He was unsparingly critical of those sociologists 'who spun theories and carried out analytical acrobatics or constructed models on the foundation of skimpy and unreliable data'. Rejecting the rigid distinction between 'pure' and 'applied' research, he thought both could contribute towards action in the arena of social policy (*Ibid.* 355). Naturally, therefore, Dube not only dismissed 'much adumbrated ideal of value neutrality' as a myth but also criticised those social scientists who wrote in a jargonised language incomprehensible to both social scientists and policy makers (*Ibid.* 356-57).

It is surprising that in support of his argument, favouring involvement of sociologists in social policy, Dube went to the extent of ruling out 'social sciences as an autonomous force', instead, he suggested that 'given the political culture in developing countries, characterised by arrogance of power and celebration of ignorance social scientists should reconcile to their instrumental use'. He was thereby hinting that politicians have all the power (and the ability) to define goals of development in ideological terms.

and that high-sounding theoretical work of a sociologist, often focusing on trivial issues, has little impact on public policy. In other words, Dube believed that 'the purists among the academics who tended to relegate all "applied" research work to a lower status were chiefly responsible for rendering social sciences redundant for social policy' (*Ibid* 359).<sup>3</sup> Having collaborated with the state and governmental agencies frequently, Dube (1977 12-13) always pleaded on the following lines

Indian sociology has to establish its credibility with the people and the policy makers. To this end it should work towards enlarging the consciousness of the people at large and also towards sharpening the problem solving capability of the policy makers with sociological insights. An adequate strategy for the effective utilisation of sociological inputs as yet remains to be used.

Surprisingly though, Dube did not raise the most crucial question as to who should decide and define the main components of the 'desired end states'. On the contrary, he appeared to be willingly conceding this right exclusively to politicians and bureaucrats, the latter are known to be the back-seat drivers of social policy. Dube's complete rejection of value neutrality in sociology and his denial of autonomy to social sciences in absolute terms also raises a further problem of epistemology and about the foundation as well as limitations of one's methodology. Is the knowledge that sociologists produce so infallible that policy interventions made on that basis would be free from social costs, blemishes and risks? While intervening through policy, sociologists may find their self-righteousness hard to overcome. However, do sociologists have the moral right to intervene in a manner that would transform a social structure completely, particularly when they are unable to forecast what long-term effects of such interventions would be and whether these effects would be coherent with the 'desired end states' that their policy concerns aim at? It is very likely that, having worked within the outfit of a state-sponsored research institute and with bureaucracy long enough, Dube became more soft towards both politicians and bureaucrats, and that he was perhaps more willing than his contemporaries were to compromise over the identity and to sacrifice the autonomy of social scientists at the altar of the state.

On the relationship between sociology and social policy, M S Gore has articulated his views clearly. He, too, has strongly pleaded that sociologists should accept social policy as one of their direct concerns. He has conceptualised social policy thus

A policy statement is an indication of the direction proposed to be taken by an authority in a given field of activity. A social policy is a policy concerning the social aspects of a community's life (and involving) programmes and services in the areas of health, education, housing, rehabilitation, social welfare and welfare of the backward classes' (Gore 1983: 3)

Evidently, Gore's long and creative engagement with social work education in Indian universities gets reflected in this statement. If he were to enumerate these policy concerns and identify specific problem areas today, he would have unfailingly added such problems as poverty, eradication, water pollution and environmental degradation, etc., while at the same time he would have stressed the need for protection of weaker sections, for empowerment through positive discrimination and for removing gender inequality in the scope of policy. Since Gore has broadly suggested that policy issues are basically issues of human freedom, equality of opportunity and of human welfare (*Ibid.* 3-4), his policy concerns encompass substantive issues that go beyond naive welfarism.

According to Gore, the tasks for sociologists interested in social policy include the conduct of studies of 'relationship between social structure, levels of technological development and social policy alternatives'. Nonetheless, the work of a policy-oriented sociologist does not end with policy formulation only, rather it has to be followed by monitoring the implementation of the policy and evaluation of its performance. For this sociologists would need to marshal credible data with which alone they could possibly bring out fallacies, if any, in policy formulation and also expose inadequacies in programme implementation. Gore even recommends sociologists to undertake experimental studies that would enable them to determine 'causality of occurrence of particular social problems and to judge the efficacy of newly devised remedial measures' for the problem(s) identified by them (*Ibid.* 9-11).

The framework of social pathology within which Gore tends to identify and analyse problems to be tackled by a proactive social policy is too obvious to need detailed discussion. However, two problems emerge in casting sociological inquiries into the mould of social pathology. First, such a framework assumes 'social work' discipline to be the practical or 'applied' side of sociology. Moreover, whether or not sociological analysis has to provide any theoretical foundation for prognosis and for social policy (for problem solving) usually remains unstated or not sufficiently emphasised. However, for Gore, a social policy at a given point of time is an integral part of the desired direction of change in the long run. Second,

an over-enthusiasm for undertaking diagnostic and experimental studies as preparation for policy intervention and for testing the efficacy of welfare measures is most likely to result in building pressure on sociologists to ignore moral and epistemological questions referred to earlier. Does an analyst have the moral right to experiment and tinker with human groups and with their freedom of life and choice? Social scientists may like to assert the validity of their knowledge and then assume they have an unassailable right to offer certain material benefits to an experimental group and deny the same to the control group. Above all, long-term effects, particularly the adverse ones, of such experiments are seldom anticipated when they are first introduced. For instance, the beneficial aspects of Green Revolution have since then been demystified by some studies on the environmental impact of Green Revolution measures—like seed technology, chemical fertilisers, etc (see Shiva 1991)

It must, however, be pointed out that, to Gore, a sociologist does not have to be a detached observer of social reality. Social analysis that precedes policy formulation ought to proceed with certain value assumptions and with some crystallised ideas about the 'desired end states'. In a sense he recognises the fact that a statement of social policy is quintessentially an ideological statement (*Ibid* 4-11). This is also an endorsement of Myrdal's view that a sociologist's impact on social policy is fundamentally ideological. However, like Myrdal, Gore, too, leaves out answering the most intractable question in methodology as to how an ideologically inclined, but not committed, social analyst could also remain faithful to the primary role of a scientific observer. What is important for our purpose here is that Gore has lamented the fact that the role of sociologists in social policy has been always marginal. He wanted them to involve themselves in effectively providing social dimensions to development planning. For this to happen he even recommended that courses on 'applied sociology' be incorporated in sociology curricula to ensure that students of sociology are equipped with proper training and skills for handling tasks of social policy (*Ibid* 1-2).

### **Ideological Critiquing: A Response to Policy**

That 'theory and practice of sociology are inseparable and that a sociologist does not gain knowledge for its own sake but for guiding actions' has been stated quite emphatically by I P Desai. His firm intellectual conviction was that 'knowledge must help us to solve short-term and long-term problems of our society' (I P Desai 1979 3).<sup>4</sup> Administration and

public and private organisations also try to deal with societal problems, but they all operate within a given system or subsystem and seek alteration or change only *within* I P Desai had 'systemic change', or social transformation, in mind. Expressing his unease at the change that the state-sponsored development plans had brought about in India during the first twenty-five years of her Independence, he criticised both the development planning and the bureaucracy that executed it (without naming it directly), as it aimed only at tinkering the system. To achieve 'the desired type of society, sociological knowledge must necessarily guide action'. Here, by 'action', he implied collective mobilisation involving people at large. Obviously, he trusted the state-directed social policy and development planning much less than he believed in participatory collective action of the people. His thrust was, thus, on social movement and mass mobilisation as he thought it to be a more effective way to achieve *systemic change*. However, such a movement aimed at achieving what he called 'the desired type of society' ought to have a minimum consensus that is usually hard to reach because of structural differentiations and contradictions within the Indian society. Therefore, he emphasised that an appropriate 'strategy and possibilities of mobilisation have to be based on these very internal divisions' (I P Desai 1981: 63).

Without professing to be a Marxist sociologist, I P Desai (*Ibid.* 59-63) stressed the complementarity between theory and practice in the production of sociological knowledge. It must, however, be noted that the argument that rigorous sociological analysis must precede action or intervention can be used by both—those who wish to bring about changes *within* the system and those who talk of systemic/structural changes. It is clear though that I P Desai was candid about his own predilection towards 'collective action oriented research' as compared to 'social policy oriented sociological analysis' under the state sponsorship.

Like I P Desai, critiquing the existing state policy of development was also the core concern of A R Desai, reflected especially in his major writings on rural development in India. Whether it is the state-sponsored CDP or land reform in the 1950s and 1960s, or the cooperative movement or Green Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s, A R Desai exposed the contradictions inherent in the very premises of mixed capitalist economy on which India's development plans rested (see A R Desai 1984: 107-23, 611-21, 884-93). Also, he unfailingly probed the class interests that the development policy was serving. Thereby he focused on the hiatus between the vision and the reality, between the lofty policy and the actual plans and programmes that were implemented by the bureaucracy (A R

Desai 1986 13-35) For instance, he was extremely critical of the way land reforms that were being carried out had created a class of private entrepreneurs in the form of agricultural capitalists who had surplus resources to invest in agricultural improvements for profiteering. Likewise, 'the policy and practice of promoting cooperatives and Green Revolution, instead of reducing social inequalities in rural India, widened the gap between the rich and the poor, and enhanced economic and socio-political power of the rural rich' (A R Desai 1985 27)<sup>5</sup> He strongly advocated an alternative development policy and strategy that would facilitate social transformation involving basic structural changes in agrarian relations and in institutional arrangements—such as the structure and control of cooperatives and in industrial production in India.

Notwithstanding his cogent critique of the state-directed social policy, and despite the fact that he was willing to engage in authoring an alternative statement of policy, there is little evidence to show that A R Desai ever associated with preparation of any counter policy document. It is widely known that he preferred to work with and to mobilise small groups of young activists and NGOs and then to train and conscientise them rather than enlisting himself as a collaborator with any state-controlled agency, research outfit or with bureaucratic machinery. Knowing his activist inclinations, it is also likely that the government seemed to have never turned to him for any advice or consultation on social policy matters.

The same holds true for the approach of P C Joshi about the role of sociologist in social policy. Like D P Mukerji and A R Desai, Joshi also chose to critically evaluate social policies of the state and the impact they have on different sections and classes of society.<sup>6</sup> Their critiques have always been rooted in a Marxist theoretical perspective. Joshi (1975) has unsparingly criticised the way land reforms policy was translated in practice in the form of reform legislations and the way their half-hearted implementation had helped the upper and middle layers of Indian peasantry to move socially upward in the agrarian hierarchy and to emerge as independent peasant proprietors. In fact, Joshi has expressed the view that 'India's agricultural policy reflected a shift from an initial emphasis on "institutional change" to "diffusion of new technology" (such as the Green Revolution, etc.) within the given agrarian social arrangements'. He has even recommended an alternative agrarian policy, favouring the idea of 'land to the tiller', that he thinks to be 'not only good politics but also sound economics' (Joshi 2002 234-39). Neither A R Desai nor Joshi, ever made any secret of his theoretical-ideological predi-

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lections and commitment. Likewise, Joshi also never seems to have participated in any exercise of policy making though his ideas may have influenced, directly or indirectly, the land reforms process and rural development policies in Kerala and West Bengal where Left-Front governments have ruled for a long time. Though concerned and critical about social policy, Joshi has stayed away from actual policy making and implementation, perhaps for understandable reasons. It must, however, be mentioned here that he headed a Committee on Prasar-Bharati Doordarshan Policy that was constituted by the Government of India soon after the Emergency was lifted in 1977. He had inducted Yogendra Singh as a member of the Committee that toured the country extensively and submitted its report. Barring this exception, Joshi always stuck to his conviction that over-anxiety of social scientists to interact with the state authorities and bureaucracy in the making of any social policy has an inherent danger of statism in the field of social sciences. If this danger is to be averted then national agencies like the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) should assign a more decisive role to social scientists than to bureaucrats in policy making in general and in decision making about research priorities in particular (Joshi 1979). Otherwise, the perceived danger of social sciences becoming merely the tools of the government is likely to become real.

### **Methodological Prerequisites of Social Policy**

To Ramkrishna Mukherjee a social policy is about development that indicates 'what society should be like' in future. Any policy statement of this kind is tenable only when sociologists have a credible data-base that would enable them to make an assessment of 'what will it be' like. By its very nature the concept of development is value loaded, as compared with the concept of 'social change' that is value free. Therefore, preparing a policy or planning for development is a task in which value premises are embedded. However, a sociologist can 'make the concept as operationally value free by identifying one set of conditions, attributes and indicators of development, while another, but correspondingly reverse, set for retrogression', that is, the opposite of development (Ramkrishna Mukherjee 1979: 87-88). The only way to forcefully free the concept of social development, around which social policies are spun, from its differential value load is to use 'inductive inferential approach', as that alone can enable sociologists to answer categorically questions like 'what it is', 'how it is' 'why it is'.

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and 'what will it be' and thereby to systematise value loads (*Ibid* 89-139)

Any tenable futuristic statement about 'what should it be' can be made only on a solid foundation of substantive evidence and on an objective probabilistic basis rather than from a subjective standpoint (*Ibid* 138) Ramkrishna Mukherjee's argument, that a social policy for 'what should it be' cannot, and must not, be removed from objectively ascertained set of facts that points towards 'what will it be' in probabilistic terms, is methodologically sound. A possible deduction from this position could be that any idea or programme as a part of the 'what should it be' can be sustainable and viable only if the gap between 'what should it be' (that is, the desired) and 'what will it be' (that is, projected or predicted) is minimised by carrying out inductive inferential exercises. Using this argument, Ramkrishna Mukherjee explains why Indian sociologists have not made any significant contribution to 'social policy'. In his view, sociology, as a body of knowledge, has been founded upon a deductive-positivistic basis. Such an approach prompts practitioners of sociology to 'translate one of the deductive theories into practice on a dogmatic, doctrinaire (rather than on factual) base' (*Ibid* 137). Consequently, 'inductive sociology has made little headway so far on both ideological grounds and on practical consideration'. In this context he is critical of all 'non-conformist Indian sociologists for having played essentially a negative role and for their doctrinaire approach' (Ramkrishna Mukherjee 1974 169-75) that they adopted due to their ideological differences with 'pace-makers' in Indian sociology.<sup>7</sup> Dictated by meta-academic considerations, some non-conformists remained within the bounds of deductive-positivistic approach, instead of developing inductive inferential approach. This has led to their policy prescriptions becoming unrealistic and rhetorical expressions of value preferences, if not utopias, in the absence of factual basis (Ramkrishna Mukherjee 1977 133-40). Thus, Ramkrishna Mukherjee has attributed the failure of Indian sociologists to make any noteworthy contribution to social policy to their excessive preoccupation with deductive positivistic theoretical approach.

On the other side, however, ironical as it may sound, complaints and serious concerns have been echoed about near absence of 'theory' or at best only a metaphoric use of theory in sociological research in India (see Y. Singh 1984 109-25). Barring exceptions, most research guides and examiners of doctoral theses in Indian universities frequently express their concern about the lack of theoretical awareness in research dissertations that they supervise or evaluate. Ramkrishna Mukherjee's critique of

Indian sociology, read with these oft-repeated complaints, makes one feel that the record of Indian sociologists' contribution to both theory and social policy is far below expectations, if not totally dismal. This is really not the case as for social policy, as we shall see shortly. It needs to be noted, however, that Ramkrishna Mukherjee's (1973: 29-58) own concern seems to be limited to identifying the genesis of this deficiency in Indian sociology, not social policy *per se*.

The above review of social policy concerns in the works of a few selected Indian sociologists is extensive, but not exhaustive. It is also not my intention to create the impression that sociologists in India have totally sidelined social policy issues. The purpose of this review is to understand why the professional community of Indian sociologists could not build strong bridges for frequent interactions with policy makers. It is sometimes argued that though the process of sociological thinking or imagination begins with surveying the reality around, it generally has a tendency to slip into theoretical discourse. The burden of the universalistic/theoretical nature of the discipline is too heavy to allow sociologists any respite to explore their potentialities for solving problems of the society that they are part of. The reasons for this tendency are not far to seek. In international fora of social sciences, it is often suggested that the emphasis of social scientists in many developing countries is on dealing with immediate practical problems, and this has meant that social sciences have not developed there with the same degree of sophistication in terms of theoretical distinctiveness as they have in the developed countries (see Platt 2002: 76). Hence, in a country like India, the discipline of sociology would not be considered as a fundamental intellectual unit in the structure of academia if it failed to relate its research work to the body of theoretical systems developed by sociologists from the developed world.

### **Noteworthy Inputs to Social Policy**

Those who started their careers in the 1950s and 1960s would recall how discussions on development, polarised into 'growth' versus 'social justice' camps, finally gave impetus to 'human factors in development' while launching the CDP. In the 1950s that had provided a meeting ground for sociologists and policy makers. By the mid-1960s, however, CDP itself got a setback and consequently the need to sustain that interaction with policy makers got attenuated. Yet, the relationship between sociology and social policy did not cease. Subsequently, at the initiative of J P Naik, the ICSSR sponsored a series of empirical studies for independently assessing

the educational status of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) and the extent to which educational programmes (such as scholarships, reservations, etc.) were accessible to these indigent sections. Entrusted to sociologists and social anthropologists, these studies were conducted in different parts of the country in the 1970s. Reports produced by them have been published and the resultant policy implications were highlighted in a pan-Indian level analysis. Those policy recommendations included suggestions like 'scholarship to be treated as an incentive rather than a maintenance grant', 'remedial teaching or special tuition' to be introduced, etc (see Chitnis 1981: 158-66). How far these have been implemented by the government needs to be ascertained and documented separately. Similarly, certain studies in the sociology of deviance also produced policy relevant recommendations for treatment of juvenile offenders, prison reform, probation and parole, and modalities of inflicting punishment. It must be recalled that the Mandal Commission had consulted three leading sociologists and social anthropologists in the 1980s and 1990s. They were asked to opine whether caste would be a more reliable indicator of backwardness as compared to economic, social and educational backwardness. When their views were not heeded, they had dissociated from the assignment. Similarly, at the time of deciding the final format and contents of the Census-2001, some Indian sociologists and social anthropologists, through newspaper articles, had impressed upon the Census authorities and the government the urgent need to include caste enumeration. However, in spite of their persuasive argument and policy input, caste was not included in the household schedule of Census-2001.

Even today we read reports on the findings of research projects undertaken by sociologists who have done work on such problems as environmental impact of big dams, urban housing and slums, rural poverty and migration, conditions of the SCs, STs and minorities,<sup>8</sup> gender disparities in education and employment, domestic violence and sexual harassment at the work place, problems of old age,<sup>9</sup> health (HIV/AIDS) and nutrition, NGOs and the like. The policy relevance of these themes hardly needs to be over-emphasised. Furthermore, there are as many as twenty-nine social science research institutes that receive regular maintenance grants from the ICSSR. At least some of them are clearly mandated to undertake research relevant for state policy and for evaluating performance of development programmes. In nearly all such institutes sociologists are employed, and it would be unreasonable to think that they are indifferent to social policy oriented research. Likewise, some sociologists and social anthropologists have been appointed in the past as the Commissioners for

SCs and STs, as Heads/Directors of Tribal Research Institutes, as vice-chancellors of universities and have held important diplomatic assignments (including those in UNESCO, UNDP, International Social Science Council, and the like) Even today several of our professional colleagues are invited to serve as members of the state level Commission for SCs and STs They all keep influencing policies directly or indirectly However, as yet there is no systematic documentation of their contribution to policy making, or to the modification and critique of existing policies

To cite just one example, thirty-five years ago B R Chauhan (1968) had studied Panchayati Raj to find out why increased power was being vested in local bodies and whether such a devolution of powers was effective in making people participate in decision making at the grass roots level One of his findings was as one moved upwards from the village level to the block and district level (under the CDP) the participation of agricultural classes progressively declined while greater participation and influence of non-agricultural, business and service classes was discernible in the affairs at the Block and District levels (*Ibid* 50-52) Chauhan, therefore, offered an important suggestion to policy makers that in the process of democratic decentralisation while reorganising Panchayati Raj institutions, more powers should not be given to District level leaders because that would harm the interests of agriculturists In the present day context, particularly after the passing of the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution, Chauhan's suggestion has policy relevance, though his study was not planned as a policy research *per se* In the ultimate analysis, the actual use of sociological research would hinge on the extent to which politicians and bureaucracy responsible for people-oriented governance are sensitised to social science research

Notwithstanding this track record of social policy concerns and participation of sociologists in policy making, two things must be noted here First, even if research theses and projects came out with important findings having policy relevance, these are either not sufficiently highlighted or not communicated to appropriate persons, institutions and official agencies who deal with policy making, implementation and evaluation Second, and perhaps more important, the Indian bureaucracy has a mindset that values only result-oriented work, all other exercises like academic seminars, discussions and research projects—their theory and methodology—constitute a wasteful luxury of the Indian intelligentsia Barring exceptions, most bureaucrats believe that they have all the expertise and can function both as generalists and as technocrats, hence, they do not feel the need to seek opinion from or consult social scientists

Or maybe, when they do consult sociologists, they do so as a ritual, or just to seek legitimacy without letting them influence *a priori* decisions arrived at by the bureaucracy. Thus, very little of sociological inputs find their way into policy documents.<sup>10</sup>

An important reason why most sociologists, barring exceptions, either choose to stay away from or are left out of the policy making process is that there are no institutional mechanisms in India to bridge the gap between social science research and policy making by the state. The University Grants Commission (UGC) and the ICSSR have restricted their functional mandate to identifying research priorities and to funding social science research primarily. No doubt, both these apex bodies had set up special panels or Task Force-like committees for 'women's/gender studies', 'tribal studies', 'area studies', 'election studies', 'environmental studies', 'peace studies', 'Gandhian studies', and the like. They have come out with some benchmark reports on 'status of women', or on 'educational status of the SCs and STs', and the like. Without being unfair to these institutions, it can be said, without the slightest risk of being contradicted, that they have succeeded more in promoting research, but not so much in facilitating linkages between research and policy makers. The UNESCO's programme, called MOST (Management of Social Transformation), launched in 1994, developed many regional and international networks working on long-term projects concerning multicultural and multiethnic societies (Platt 2002: 60-61). Similar effort is lacking on the part of the funding agencies in India. This has resulted in most research findings remaining unutilised or under-utilised.

In the case of sociological research in India, many empirical studies in diverse areas have come out with findings that had significant policy implications. Yet with all our solid resources, data and findings, we did not or could not communicate with policy makers and could not bring home the usefulness of our researches. An effective liaison with government bureaucracy, not individually but institutionally, would have made all the difference, particularly in the absence of ready-made demand or market for social research in India. In this regard neither our professional organisations nor the UGC and ICSSR seem to have worked out a strategy to facilitate purposeful interaction between sociologists and policy makers.

Given this scenario, professional sociologists seem to have adopted four different modes of responding to social policy issues.

(1) Concentrate and involve in theory-oriented research aimed at achieving esoteric ends of understanding and explaining social phenomena

in universalistic terms. This implies that social policy would not form part of one's concern and would be treated as outside the agenda of scientific sociology.

(2) Through painstaking effort and methodological rigour produce research results that have policy relevance or implications, but remain indifferent or ambivalent about their utilisation by policy makers. The net result of this response has been that research publications remain on the shelves of libraries, never to be read, or read rarely, if at all, or lie in the record rooms of government offices (if researches are sponsored by the government), but seldom consulted during policy making and planning development programmes.

(3) Lobby vigorously with the government bureaucrats, keep moving in the corridors of power frequently to bring to their notice the utility of specific sociological studies/findings and their policy implications. Whether this would result in acceptance of policy recommendations cannot be guaranteed, but it would build networks with the bureaucracy to ensure continued support for further research, and in some cases at least, also secure consultancies and positions of decision making outside the portals of universities.

(4) Critically evaluate existing social/developmental policies—their objectives, underlying rationale, priorities and targets and their social consequences in short-term and long-term perspectives. After all social criticism is an essential part of social engineering, as it helps transform the mindsets of the rulers and the ruled and of the policy makers and the people affected by their policies. In this sense 'sociology as critiquing' can be complementary to effective governance. This mode of response to policy tends to be more effective when it is adopted without eyeing for any material/pecuniary gains to flow from policy-making agencies, institutions and departments, it must nonetheless be matched by reaffirmation of the freedom of thought and autonomy of sociologists.

These four modes appear to be the ways in which Indian sociologists have responded to demands on them to contribute to social policy so far. Lacking any organised market for sociological research, professional sociologists seem to go by their preferences. In my view, any rigid adherence to any one of these four options exclusively, regardless of the nature of the problem or the policy issue, may prove to be detrimental to sociology and its social purpose in India in the long run. Sociologists are then left with the choice of trying permutations and combinations of these four modalities as a short-term coping strategy. All they need is a strong conviction that they act only at the dictates of their conscience. Sociologists

must safeguard not just their mundane professional interests but also their freedom of thought, voice of reason and professional autonomy. This strategy may not yield immediate dividends but will ensure that prospects of doing meaningful and purposeful sociology in India remain bright or at least do not deteriorate further.

## Notes

Presidential Address delivered at the XXIX All India Sociological Conference, Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur, 21-23 December 2003

- 1 Ghurye's *Aborigines so-called and their future* was first published in 1943. Its revised and enlarged edition came out in 1959 under the title *The scheduled tribes*, in which Ghurye advanced strong views about the handling of what was then considered as 'the tribal problem' in India.
- 2 Here Saksena is only reiterating the views of D. P. Mukerji discussed earlier.
- 3 Obviously, here Dube is criticising, though indirectly, all those theoreticians in social sciences who relish working at the level of pure abstraction, using sophisticated theoretical frameworks but caring little for credibility of their data.
- 4 Saksena has also made a similar observation while chairing a Panel on 'Sociological Perspectives in a Democratic Polity' at the All India Sociological Conference (Bombay 1967). 'Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is not enough. More important is the social utility of knowledge. If the sociological researchers kept looking down their noses at the policy makers and confined themselves to purely academic and scientific character of their studies, their work would lose much of its significance. Sociology is an aid to social welfare in a free society' (Narain 1968: 93-94).
- 5 I have brought this point out more elaborately elsewhere (see Dhanagare 1987).
- 6 Joshi's (1983 and 1986) emphasis on giving prominence to cultural factors in social policy and development planning is clearly influenced by the views of his teacher D. P. Mukerji.
- 7 The terms 'pace-makers' and 'non-conformists' in Indian sociology are taken from Ramkrishna Mukherjee (1977).
- 8 For instance, the Planning Commission had constituted a Steering Committee for the Empowerment of the SCs and STs and Minorities for the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-07) with some sociologists as its members. However, its report was so hurriedly discussed and adopted that the social scientist members could hardly provide any meaningful input (see GOI 2001 Annexure I-IV).
- 9 The National Policy document on older persons, for instance, clearly visualises research activity and inputs from gerontologists and institutions/university departments. It further provides for financial support for research activities. Many sociologists working on 'ageing' have taken advantage of this facility. However, whether or not this stipulation eventually led to a dialogue and exchange between policy makers and sociologists, and to the dissemination of their research findings among policy makers is yet to be documented (see GOI nd: 20-21).
- 10 For example, many social scientists, including some eminent sociologists, were invited to a seminar on 'National Policy on Education-1986' (see AIU 1988 Annexure 103-24) to make policy recommendations. However, how many of their suggestions were adopted by the government eventually is not known.



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## Teaching/Learning Sociology: A Critical Engagement with Modernity

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*This paper seeks to intervene in the debate on the culture of learning, particularly the way sociology is being taught in our colleges and universities. Its primary objective is to examine how sociology as a body of knowledge responds to the complex trajectory of modernity, or how an alternative form of teaching/learning, which is rooted in our cultural experiences, can critique the discontents of modernity and strive for emancipatory consciousness.*

In this paper I intend to reflect on my engagement with sociology, particularly in the context of modernity. Many questions strike my mind. Is there only one brand of modernity? Or, are there multiple modernities? Is it possible and desirable to create our own pattern of modernity? Can sociology throw new light on these complex issues? As a teacher/learner of sociology, I, therefore, wish to reexamine the contents of sociological knowledge, the courses we teach, the ideas/theories we live with, the books we ask our students to read, the pedagogic practices we engage in, and, above all, the way we have experienced sociology. My aim is to understand whether sociology as it is taught in our universities can be re-defined to enrich our understanding of modernity, or create an alternative agenda of modernity.

### Context of Learning

To begin with, let me speak of the social context in which I am learning and inviting my students to the discipline. An understanding of this context, I would argue, is important, because sociology as a body of knowledge cannot be separated from the specific social milieu in which it is produced. For instance, can one make sense of Comtean sociology without situating it in the context of the changing social reality that the French Revolution led to? Or, can one comprehend the Frankfurt School Marxism without understanding the darkness that the European society

was experiencing because of the devastation of war and the growth of Fascism and Nazism?

While reflecting on my times, I realise that there are two dangers (or threats to the project of a sane egalitarian society) that haunt my consciousness. First, we are witnessing what is popularly known as fundamentalism. It seeks to appropriate the culture of the nation, equates it with the constructed culture of a particular religious community (more often, the dominant community), and strives for homogenisation (Thapar 1991). It negates diversity and plurality, it is exclusivist and violent. Fundamentalism manifests itself as communalism: the way one's 'religious' identity is privileged and allowed to differentiate one from the 'other' and thereby denying the ethos of multiculturalism, plurality and tolerance (Chandra 1984). The assertion of fundamentalism, as we notice, has been affecting almost every aspect of our collective existence: politics, culture as well as the domain of knowledge.

Second, there is yet another threat emanating from what is being regarded as globalisation. The fact is that we are not witnessing symmetrical/egalitarian globalisation. Instead, we are experiencing essentially a one-way traffic: the way the Euro-American world—partly because of the irresistible forces of global capitalism in the absence of a meaningful socialist challenge, and partly because of the seductive power of new technologies of communication—is becoming *hegemonic* with its mass culture of consumerism, and its celebrated ideal of the market as the ultimate saviour (Sklair 1991: 6). The state, therefore, begins to retreat (Kothari 1995). Not only that. With globalisation parallel ideas/projects like Marxian socialism or the Gandhian notion of alternative development, or the search for indigenous knowledge and solutions, tend to become old-fashioned!

Fundamentalism and globalisation appear to be qualitatively different from each other. Yet, a critical analysis suggests that they are two sides of the same coin. Both are exclusivist and hegemonic. Both seek to negate people's participation in the polity and economy. Furthermore, fundamentalism and globalisation reinforce each other. The more 'global' the society becomes, the more the fundamentalist upsurge develops. In the domain of socio-political life there can be convergence between fundamentalism and globalisation, because this unholy alliance can try to resist the growth of pro-people/participatory/egalitarian culture.<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, Hindutva and market can cohabit, a ban on a historical statement on beef eating and the promotion of beauty contests can go together! In a way, these two trends negate the aspirations of the freedom struggle, or the

movement for decolonisation. It is not my contention that the discourses of the freedom struggle were not problematic. In fact, every careful student of social history knows that the mainstream nationalism was not always free from its upper caste/upper class bias (Guha 1982), there was also a conservative/revivalist trend in the freedom struggle that might have led to a tension-ridden relationship between, say, Ambedkar and the Indian National Congress (Omvedt 1994). Yet, there were progressive/ emancipatory ideals in the freedom struggle which could hardly be negated. These days the ruling socio-political and economic forces in India are repressing these ideals and aspirations. For example, Gandhi's notion of *swaraj*, or his affirmation of the spiritual unity of humankind has become merely a historical memory. Even the Nehruvian agenda of nation-building that the post-colonial Indian state chose got a severe blow from these twin forces.

But then, there are other stories which are no less important: the stories of *resistance*. We have been seeing the assertion of marginalised groups and subaltern castes: the way they are overcoming their age-old silence, and slowly but surely making their presence felt in the site of politics and culture (Kothari 1988). We are seeing feminist movements and ecological movements. In a way, be it Brahmanism or patriarchy or technocentric developmental model, old ideas are interrogated, and new aspirations emerge.

It is in this context that I am doing sociology. My sociology, far from being abstract, disembodied, value-neutral and ahistorical, emerges out of this context, and the challenges it poses before me. I attach three purposes to sociology: (1) As a body of knowledge it must provide solid data/ information relating to the state of affairs prevalent in the country. (2) It must cultivate the critical faculty to make sense of what is happening all around. Why does fundamentalism grow? What is the politics of globalisation? Or, what are the possibilities in new social movements? (3) It should also be seen as an emancipatory experience. It should generate, as Alvin W. Gouldner (1970) expected in his own way, self-reflexivity, inspire one to engage in an alternative practice/theorisation to create a plural/egalitarian society.

### Sociology: In Search of Alternative Modernity

The meanings I am attaching to sociology are, in fact, deeply related to an alternative civilisational project that I wish to regard as a search for a humble/tolerant/culturally-sensitive modernity. I am aware that there are

limits to words/definitions, these often cause confusion, and fail to reveal what one is really trying to plead for. For instance, it can be asked why I am speaking of culture-sensitive modernity, why not radicalised tradition, or something like that. Possibly, as one can argue, I believe that modernity, despite its discontents, is progressive, and I apprehend that the 'deadweight' of tradition may hamper our cultural/intellectual growth. Or, maybe, I am inclined to the concept of modernity because of its cognitive prestige, whereas an affinity with the concept of tradition may be seen as 'backward-looking'.<sup>1</sup> It is also possible that, despite multiple modernities, there is something common among these projects, and the commonality is the idea of freedom/agency, or autonomy/equality. The debate can go on. What I, therefore, propose is that, instead of getting indulged in this definitional dispute, it would be better if I identify the striking features of my project.

(1) It implies that I am not consenting to what some would regard as the doctrine of a singular/uniform modernity—the modernity that emerged in the West, the modernity that was rooted in the eventful *Enlightenment project*, the modernity that sought to become hegemonic/universal in the name of linear historical progress, the separation of the phenomenal from the transcendental, the secularisation of polity and culture, the epistemological optimism centred on science and technology, the longing for the Kingdom of Reason, and the spread of an urban/industrial form of living (Hall, Held and Mc Grew 1992). There are, of course, concrete/visible gains of this Eurocentric/pro-Enlightenment modernity. Who would, for example, deny the remarkable improvement in life conditions, the creation of wealth and prosperity, the generation of choices, the 'cultivation of critical faculty, and the freedom of the individual from the restrictions imposed by the community? Yet, this modernity is not free from its darker sides (Giddens 1990: 7). In a way, it leads to Occidentalism, the West seeks to shape the destiny of humankind in the way it considers desirable. Cultural differences are, therefore, seen as obstacles that need to be overcome in order to embrace what the West projects as universal modernity.<sup>1</sup> No wonder, colonialism—the urge to invade/marginalise other cultures, and annihilate differences—becomes inseparable from this Eurocentric modernity (Venn 2000). Furthermore, its Baconian urge to equate knowledge with power, and its Cartesian duality between the mind and the body lead to an *instrumental* orientation to life, nature and culture. Violence is an integral component of the project of Eurocentric modernity (Burkitt 1999). This is not to suggest that we become critical of everything about Western modernity. Although there is a dominant logocentric/phallogocentric

pattern in Western modernity, there are also parallel currents—say, young Karl Marx's (1977) construction of emancipatory communism transcending the dualities like human species vs nature, man vs woman, individual vs collective, and work vs play. Or, as a creative thinker like Jürgen Habermas would suggest, the innate potential of *communicative rationality* can be explored to restore the progressive features of modernity. I would, therefore, argue that, while we think of alternative modernity, we should not remain mindlessly blind to everything Western. We should explore the possibilities that are alive. Our task is not to negate modernity, but decolonise it, free it from its Eurocentric ambition, make it humble, and allow it to learn from alternative cultural traditions.<sup>2</sup>

(2) The culturally-sensitive modernity that I am talking about means that we need to be extraordinarily creative in our engagement with cultural traditions. This would require a new mindset that would transcend the dualities created by occidental modernity: modernity and tradition, rational and spiritual, secular and sacred. As a result, we would begin to see tradition/culture not as garbage, but as a *possibility*, its meanings can be radicalised to serve an essentially progressive purpose. Imagine, for instance, the spiritual ideal of oneness rooted in Indian religions. We know how bhakti/Sufi saints and mystics tapped this potential, radicalised their meanings, fought against a dogmatic/ritualistic tradition, and sought to create a new one filled with the message of love and harmony. In other words, modernity need not be seen as a process of overcoming tradition. Modernity may mean creation of a radicalised tradition. For example, like many, I too have believed that secularism in India need not be seen as a 'modern lesson' borrowed from the West, it is, in fact, our own language that has been created by, say, Kabir, Nanak or Gandhi. It is in this context that I wish to assert that this aspect of alternative modernity that I am pleading for is strikingly different from the modernity implicit in fundamentalism or religious nationalism. Although it may sound paradoxical, fundamentalism or aggressive religious nationalism is often related to a typical logocentric/phallogocentric modernist search for 'order' and 'certainty'. As a result, it seeks to annihilate the 'chaos' that might emerge out of plurality, differences and the catholicity of folk traditions (Nandy 1990). No wonder, Hindu nationalists, like Golwalkar and Savarkar, did not appreciate the 'feminine/dialogic' version of Hindu tradition that Gandhi sought to popularise in modern times.

(3) When I speak of soft/humble modernity, I mean that we need to restrain the *cognitive certainty* inherent in Eurocentric modernity. In a way, this cognitive certainty emerged out of a *positivistic* perception of

science science as 'true'/'objective'/'universal' knowledge can find errors in everything that is 'non-science'! Bacon fought the 'idols' of mind, Descartes discarded the fluctuations of 'embodiment', Freud saw religion as 'collective neurosis', and Marx asserted that 'morality, religion and ethics do not have any autonomy of their own' This certainty led to Fascism and concentration camps Or, this led to what Foucault would call a 'disciplinary society' Moreover, the arrogance of positivistic science also led to massive environmental crisis It is, therefore, important to understand what Feyerabend (1982) wanted us to remember if science is allowed to become the only voice that matters, it would negate the foundations of a pluralistic society That is why, modernity ought to be soft and should generate space for a meaningful dialogue between divergent traditions of knowledge This dialogicity would lead to a new politics, an emancipatory politics, that would train us to fight all kinds of domination domination of the colonial West over the rest of the world, rich over poor, masculinity over femininity, science over environment, technology over metaphysics

One can, however, argue that the kind of modernity I am talking about is merely a piece of imagination that it does not exist or it cannot exist True, the modernity I am talking about need not be seen in its totality in concrete life-situations (the way the replica of Smith's capitalism or Marx's socialism cannot be found anywhere) Yet, there were diverse and great historical endeavours and socio-political engagements from which we can learn appropriate lessons

In fact, the creative potential of the alternative modernity I am talking about lies in its accommodative space, its ability to negotiate with multiple and even conflicting traditions For example, our modernity, I wish to emphasise, would be enriched by the catholicity of the bhakti/Sufi tradition, Gandhi's experiments with Hinduism and Phule's critique of Brahmanism In the name of privileging one it would not exclude others, instead, it would flourish out of this meaningful synthesis

That is why, the modernity I am talking about is not and cannot be a finished product It is a process that requires a high degree of openness, creativity and critical imagination It is a process in which we have to be perpetually engaged I emphasise the necessity of this engagement, as it can help us to fight the darkness of our times It can enable us to fight fundamentalism, as it would radicalise tradition instead of allowing it to degenerate into a conservative/exclusivist doctrine Likewise, its cultural sensitivity can help us to resist neo-colonialism implicit in what is being packaged as globalisation It can also give us an alternative agenda, an



alternative politics to create a sane/egalitarian/ecologically sensitive/culturally mature society

At this juncture, it is important to distinguish this kind of alternative modernity from postmodernity. It is, of course, true that postmodernists have sensitised us, they have critiqued the colonial ambition of the grand Eurocentric Enlightenment modernity, and they seem to be more sensitive to divergent cultures and their differences. In a way, one can notice a spirit of decolonisation in postmodernity. It seems that postmodernists experience some kind of guilt because, being highly sensitive, they are becoming critical of the damage that their modernist ancestors did to other cultures and traditions. I do engage myself with this postmodern sensibility. Yet, the alternative modernity I am proposing cannot be equated with postmodernity. There are two reasons for this.

First, postmodernists tend to relativise cultures in the name of privileging differences. I am not for that. I believe that cultures are dynamic possibilities, and cultures grow and enrich because of continuous cross-cultural dialogue and conversation. The spirit of dialogue is qualitatively different from *homogenisation* (when the dominant culture—say, the culture of Western modernity—becomes monologic, and imposes itself on other cultures) as well as *relativisation* (when each culture is seen as an island, and any idea of cross-cultural evaluation or consensus is disliked). In fact, the spirit of dialogue makes our alternative modernity open, pluralistic and accommodative.

Second, postmodernists seem to have deprived themselves of any grand historical mission to accomplish, they are so deeply concerned with fragments that they do not have a politico-moral agenda to restructure the world. But, I wish to argue, the alternative modernity I am proposing derives its inspiration from the enthusiasm to alter the world. Its moral principles are sensitivity to life, harmony with nature, and dialogic engagement with cultural symbols and traditions. It is different from the mood of deconstruction that characterises postmodernity.

I would argue that sociology as a discipline ought to play an important role in this process. Sociology must inspire our search for this alternative modernity.

### A Sociological Encounter with Western Modernity

What is my experience of engagement with sociology—both as a teacher and as a learner? What we do in universities, no doubt, is heavily shaped by Western sociology. Western sociology, it would not be wrong to say,

emerged out of the *Enlightenment project* of modernity. The breakdown of the medieval order, and the emergence of a new one led to new questions—the questions relating to industrialisation and division of labour, bureaucracy and rational-legal systems, science and religion, individualism, ethics and moral order. Sociology as a discipline began to respond to these modern issues. The substantial concerns of sociology were essentially modernist in nature. Take, for instance, the classical period of Western sociology. Emile Durkheim (1960) saw the growing differentiation in industrial capitalism, and wrote on division of labour and organic solidarity. Max Weber (1968) saw the emergence of rational-legal organisations, and wrote on bureaucracy as a new form of authority. Marx (1977) was trying to make sense of capitalism, private property and alienation. Sociology was modern not simply in terms of the issues it coped with, it was modern in terms of its orientation to knowledge, too. Recall Auguste Comte—the founding father of Western sociology—who announced the successful evolution of sociology. Sociology, for him, was a positivist science (no longer theological/metaphysical in nature) that could emulate the method of natural sciences and arrive at universal generalisations. Durkheim (1958) sought to give a new identity to the sociologist. A sociologist, for him, was not a mystic or a philosopher, he was essentially an empirical scientist who too could objectify social reality as a *thing* existing out there and look at it with absolute detachment and impersonality. Marx too gave a ‘scientific’ orientation to historical materialism as a mode of enquiry, and separated it from ‘ideology’ which hides/falsifies reality.

In other words, to study and teach Western sociology is to get a feeling that one is engaged in a modernist exercise. One is doing science, one is coping with modern issues. In a way, Western sociology was a celebration of Eurocentric modernity. But then, as I wish to argue, even when we do Western sociology we experience significant ambiguities towards the Enlightenment modernity. Even those who emerged out of modernity did raise uncomfortable questions. Comte, who popularised positivism, was not particularly happy with the kind of changes that the French Revolution led to in his society. He was angry with individualism, the growing divorce rate and the decline in the parental authority in the family. In fact, he needed a new religion to ‘rescue’ his society. Durkheim too was concerned with moral order—the authority of the sacred. Weber saw disenchantment and meaninglessness in the new era. As Gouldner (1975) demonstrated with remarkable sensitivity, the roots of *romanticism* could be found even in a ‘scientific’ Marx. Indeed, Robert Nisbet (1967)

was right in revealing the 'paradoxical' nature of Western sociology. It emerged out of modernity, yet, some of its concerns were 'non-modern' religion, sacred, community etc !

These ambiguities became sharper with the passage of time. To study the recent trends in Western sociology is to know ever more about the critiques of Eurocentric modernity. I wish to mention briefly the two important sources of this critique. First, look at the Frankfurt School Marxism as developed by Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse. It critiqued the positivist science, it saw the 'instrumental' character of modern science and technology, it revealed the principle of domination in the logic of the 'administered totality' or 'one dimensional' existence. In a way it was a sharp politico-moral as well as epistemological critique of European modernity (Bottomore 1984). It learned from Marx, particularly his writings on alienation and commodity fetishism, it learned from the Freudian insight into civilised morality and repression, it also relied on Friedrich Nietzsche. The second critique has come from poststructuralists/postmodernists. They debunk science as 'legitimate' knowledge, as 'objective' truth. They disagree with the search for 'foundational' knowledge. With a mood of *deconstruction* they critique any notion of homogeneity, uniformity and singular truth. They speak of multivocality, heterogeneity and differences (Harvey 1989). As a matter of fact, postmodernists destroy the foundations of modernity and, to borrow Zygmunt Bauman's (1987) words, a sociologist as an intellectual is no longer the 'legislator' (who is certain about the virtues of European Enlightenment), but a humble 'interpreter' of multiple cultural traditions!

As I wish to argue, this journey from Comte to Jean-François Lyotard is an interesting journey. In a way, as a student/teacher of sociology when we undertake this journey we experience the richness of the discipline—its multiple currents, ambiguities and paradoxes. We also begin to look at the trajectory of European modernity.

### An Experiment with the Sociology of Education

Shall we remain contented merely with Western sociology? Certainly not. It is true that our curricula, courses and reading lists are heavily dominated by divergent currents of Western sociology. It is, therefore, not impossible to come across sensitive students who often ask 'Sir, is there nothing called Indian sociology? Is there no Indian thinker worth the name who has contributed to our understanding of human societies?' True, the search for knowledge should not be guided by narrow/parochial/sectarian

interests, furthermore, knowledge transcends the barriers of cultures and nations. Yet, what cannot be denied is the process of *colonisation* that goes on in the domain of knowledge. This colonisation is real because of the continual domination of Euro-American centres of learning, and our almost uncritical acceptance of this hierarchy. For the large section of the intelligentsia in the country, it would not be wrong to say, the West continues to promise secular salvation! We do need to be 'certified' by them. Foreign publications, foreign journals, foreign degrees and frequent foreign trips are great temptations that are not easy to resist. No wonder, we have internalised the West in such a way that even when we fight against it, it does not escape us. Yet, we must strive for alternatives. While we must study Western sociology, we should also resist colonisation, and remain open to our traditions of knowledge, the traditions that can teach us some important lessons of alternative modernity.

It is in this context that I wish to narrate my experiences with the 'Sociology of Education in India'—an M A course that I have been teaching (or learning) for quite some time.

It is, of course, true that, in a course of this kind, we must learn the contributions of a spectrum of leading Western thinkers. Durkheim and Talcott Parsons, Basil Bernstein, Pierre Bourdieu and Michael Apple. But then, there was much thinking about education that originated in India. These educational perspectives, as I would argue, take us to alternative modernity. A major objective of my course is to sensitise the learner, tell her/him about this alternative story. For instance, although we all are children of Macaulay, it is important to know how colonialism often legitimated itself in the name of modern/scientific education—a gift from the colonial masters to the natives! Imagine the way Charles Grant condemned Indian cultures, questioned the integrity/honesty of Hindus and Muslims, and pleaded for a new package of learning consisting of European sciences, Christianity and English literature to take us to the kingdom of reason! Or, see Macaulay's arrogance—the typical arrogance of a colonial master (or the arrogance rooted in Occidentalism), without having the slightest knowledge of Sanskrit and Arabic he could debunk the entire knowledge system of India. I believe that a critical evaluation of Macaulay can give us remarkably powerful sociological insights into the correlation between colonialism and Eurocentric modernity, or what we can call the politics of knowledge. We could also see, as Dharampal (1983) demonstrated with his remarkable historical insight, the falsehood of the colonialist propaganda that India lived in a dark age when they conquered us, and the credit must go to them because they enlightened us.

A course of this kind also tells us about divergent challenges to Macaulay's education. While studying these challenges, we begin to appreciate the complexity of alternative modernity. For instance, there was also a conservative/revivalist trend that emerged as a reaction to colonial modernity. But then, there were experiments that critiqued both colonial modernity and conservative revivalism. In these experiments we begin to notice the assertion of a new language. As Krishna Kumar (1991) has shown in his brilliant work, Gandhi and Tagore gave new meanings to education. They opposed Macaulay's education. They were rooted in cultural traditions, yet, they were remarkably progressive and future oriented. Again, when we study the concrete experiments in education, we realise the possibilities in our modernity. Take, for instance, Sri Aurobindo's writings on education. Or, imagine how a group like *Eklavya* in Madhya Pradesh radicalised the pattern of text-book writing, the way its texts smell the local milieu, begin with the experiential reality of the subaltern masses, and create a new understanding of India that is a qualitatively different from the perception of English-educated/urban/middle class. What I am trying to say is that the course enables me to see beyond colonial modernity and religious fundamentalism, it sensitises me and my students, and leads us to explore the stories of alternative modernity: the stories of Phule, Gandhi and Tagore, and the work of *Eklavya*, or a project called *Mirambika* (a school in Delhi based on Aurobindo's philosophy of free-progress education).

### Possible Interventions

What I am saying about sociology of education is just an example. In fact, the challenges confronting us are far deeper and demanding. We need to rethink our curricula and the contents of knowledge to give a new meaning to sociology, especially concerning its relationship with alternative modernity. To initiate a meaningful debate I wish to hint at five possible areas that can restructure the curricula.

#### (1) More about Alternative West

In sociology, as I have said, we do study the contributions of modernist sociology: the sociology that emerged out of Enlightenment, and in a way celebrated the agenda of European modernity. But, at the same time, it is equally important to study those from the West who spoke an altogether different language, different from the Eurocentric modernist discourse.

For instance, while studying the origin of early sociology, we concentrate primarily on scientific/positivistic tradition. It is important to know how parallel traditions like romanticism emerged and shaped the thinking of many social scientists. Likewise, a student of sociology ought to be familiar with the dissenting voices in the West: the way Leo Tolstoy and John Ruskin, to take two striking examples, sought to evolve an alternative orientation to life, the way existential-phenomenological orientation gave a new meaning to human experience, and the way Lyotard and Michel Foucault attacked the drive towards the 'totalising theory' implicit in the cognitive certainty of modernity. Ironically, these sociologies are still being marginalised, and the overwhelming influence of mainstream/positivistic/academic sociology seeks to negate these knowledges as merely 'philosophical' or 'poetic'. We must give sufficient space to this alternative sociology.

## (2) Expanding the Horizon of Academic Sociology

In the name of 'disciplinary boundary', academic sociology erects a wall to separate itself from 'non-sociological' traditions. This is sad, because the students of sociology miss the opportunity to initiate a dialogue with those who may not belong to the 'discipline', but have original ideas about the functioning of human societies. For instance, in India some innovative ideas about society, culture and civilisation have come from those who did not necessarily belong to the university system. Gandhi, an activist and a moral philosopher, wrote on modernity, development and education. Tagore, a poet, wrote on nationalism. Aurobindo, a mystic, wrote on state, politics and the evolution of society. I would argue that the texts written by them—Gandhi's *Hind swaraj* (1938), Tagore's essays on nationalism (1941), Aurobindo's *The foundations of Indian culture* (1959) and *The human cycle* (1977)—should constitute an important component of the sociology curriculum. In these texts we see an alternative language of modernity. It is indeed sad that one often comes across good students who are familiar with the viewpoints of Habermas and Anthony Giddens on modernity, but are completely unaware of, say, Gandhi's *Hind swaraj*. I believe that the contributions of these great cultural innovators/thinkers should constitute an integral component of the sociology curriculum.

When I think of incorporating the writings of, say, Gandhi or Aurobindo, I am making a serious epistemological point. I am interrogating the taken-for-granted distinction between a knower and a doer. Instead, I wish to see a creative/organic linkage between the two. Sociology emerges out

of people's life experiences and their movements and struggles, sociology helps make sense of this experiential reality. To isolate university/cognitive sociology from this active domain of human existence is to deprive it of its colour and beauty. Moreover, what we learn from an 'activist' like Gandhi does contribute to the growth of a disciplinary perspective. For example, Gandhi's *Hind swaraj* is not just a topic for tutorial writing that a teacher asks an activist-type student to work on. As a text, it enriches the entire sociological perspective on modernity. Let a university student study—with equal seriousness—Gandhi as well as Habermas. It would be unfortunate if our students get the impression that Habermas is 'sociological', and Gandhi is not!

### (3) Study of Indian Modernity

A meaningful sociology would be incomplete without an adequate understanding of social history. I would, therefore, suggest that we should teach our students an important component of the history of modern India: colonialism as an encounter of cultures, the growth of new intelligentsia, and reinterpretation of science, religion, modernity and tradition. This social history would enable us to see how Indian modernity was evolving, and its contradictions, ambiguities and possibilities (Pathak 1998). We could also be able to see the meaning of a cross-cultural dialogue, or how certain modernist messages were being mediated through cultural symbols and metaphors. Today, we are lucky that some meaningful works/researches have been done. I recall Partha Chatterjee's (1986, 1994) significant works on nationalist thought in the colonial world, Ashis Nandy's (1983) path-breaking text that narrates the complexity of the relationship between the colonisers and the colonised, Sumit Sarkar's (1997) work on Ramakrishna, and Bhikhu Parekh's (1989) work on Gandhi. Interestingly, none of these contributors belong to what is known as 'sociology' in the university. A conventional sociology teacher is so preoccupied with 'sociological' names like André Bételle and M N Srinivas that seldom does it strike her/his mind that the texts of Nandy and Chatterjee are worth studying for sociology students.<sup>3</sup> I would suggest that we need to incorporate the studies in social history in our syllabus.

### (4) Study of Religions

From a purely secular/modernist point of view, it might appear that a study of religions is somewhat old-fashioned. Sociology, as a 'modern'

discipline, would like to distinguish itself from theology. But, as I would argue, a study of religions has acquired great relevance in contemporary times. We have seen how religion is being hijacked/appropriated by communal/fundamentalist forces. We have also seen how Indian religions have been debunked in a typical occidental fashion (recall Weber's understanding of Hinduism as a life-negating religion). We are also seeing how Indian religions have become attractive commodities in the global spiritual market. It is, however, possible to have an alternative reading of religious traditions: how these traditions have radicalised human consciousness and inspired people to engage in progressive/emancipatory endeavours. I have earlier indicated the enormous possibilities in the bhakti/Sufi tradition. We also know that Vivekananda and Gandhi, to cite but striking examples, brought Hinduism to the aspirations of the struggling masses. In other words, in their creative engagements with religion, we see the sign of a new modernity that transcends the occidental duality of secular and spiritual, reason and faith (Radice 1998, Beckerlegge 2000). Furthermore, it is equally important to know the story of logico-philosophical development that can be seen in our religions—say, the cultivation of logic (perception, inference and analogy) in *Nyaya* philosophy, the intricate relationship between the phenomenal and the transcendental (or man-nature-god) as developed by Sankara and Ramanuja. A study of these traditions, I would argue, would help our students to develop a new skill to formulate an alternative civilisational agenda. A study of religious traditions, I would, therefore, argue, should constitute an important component of sociological knowledge. This kind of critical engagement with religious studies would also help our students to fight the fundamentalist appropriation of religious traditions.

### (5) Study of New Social Movements

We must study—with great care and imagination—new social movements. These movements interrogate the fundamentals of aggressive/Eurocentric modernity: its implicit duality of man and nature, masculine and feminine, and reason and emotion. In these movements we see the articulation of a new sensitivity that speaks of reciprocity, harmony and interconnectedness. These movements also articulate the voices of the victims of 'development', the voices of marginalised people, tribal women and displaced population. When we listen to these voices, we begin to discover a quest for alternative modernity and development, alternative use of science and technology, and an alternative way of distributing our



resources (Shiva 1988, Guha 1994) This means also the willingness to listen to folk tales, subaltern and local histories, and to see the limitations of a 'grand narrative' of progress I assert that a study of new social movements is essential for doing a meaningful sociology

### Sociology as Emancipatory Practice

The changes in the curricula alone are not sufficient What is equally important is to alter the existing pedagogy, and evolve a new one Perhaps it would not be wrong to say that, for a large section of students (or even teachers), sociology is an easy option, a 'soft' discipline that one opts for if one fails to get an entry into 'hard' sciences It is thought that sociology does not require much hard-work, talent or intelligence, a mix of common-sense and newspaper knowledge, it is believed, is sufficient to deal with caste and family—the typical sociological topics which, in any case, everyone is familiar with! In other words, the self-perception of sociology learners cannot be said to be either high or positive

This must change, because no meaningful learning is possible with poor self-esteem and wounded consciousness We must study sociology with extraordinary zeal and enthusiasm, and, above all, a faith that this knowledge is emancipatory It is important to experience sociology as a project for implementing a new civilisational agenda, a vision of alternative modernity I would, therefore, suggest that sociology as a body of knowledge should not be seen merely as a piece of theoretical contemplation, it must lead to new practice, it must inspire the learner to engage in divergent emancipatory projects Let a student who is doing a course in the sociology of education spend some meaningful time with school students, inspire them to see beyond standardised texts, and experience the world in a different fashion Or, let a student of social movements live with people who have been displaced because of big developmental projects, and learn to see the world from the perspective of the victims This experiential knowledge, I would argue, would not diminish the theoretical rigour of the discipline Instead, it should enrich it, and eventually enable all of us—students, teachers and researchers—to elevate the status of the discipline

It is, however, not easy to practise an alternative pedagogy Apart from structural/institutional constraints, there are problems relating to personal motivation For an alternative pedagogy, teaching ought to be seen as a calling Ironically, however, teaching, for many of us, is just yet another job A teacher is not significantly different from any other paid

employee. Because of this routinisation, teaching loses its emancipatory potential. It is sad that no effort is made to inspire and motivate young teachers. Instead, a strange hierarchy is created: big professors/researchers vs. ordinary teachers. While the mega stars/professors attend conferences, visit abroad, hold chairs and write books, the rest are just consumers of their ideas. They are *ordinary* teachers. In the subculture of the discipline one is seldom recognised simply because of one's innovative teaching style. One can be a terribly bad teacher, but present oneself as a researcher. Yet, one can be known! This is sad. Teaching as a creative/emancipatory act ought to be given its due. Indeed, those who have an alternative agenda must be courageous enough to articulate the dissenting voice.

## Notes

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- 1 It may be alleged that the value judgements about fundamentalism and globalisation are likely to affect teaching about these phenomena in the classroom. However, I must admit that beneath my critique of fundamentalism and globalisation lies a set of politico-ethical principles to which I wish to remain committed. For example, my commitment to egalitarianism and pluralism enables me to sharpen my critique. It is quite possible that the values I cherish are not shared by my students. But then, I must argue that it is naive to pretend to be 'value-neutral'. I can begin by articulating my values without, however, preventing me from listening to those who disagree with me. Let the sociology classroom be a site of a live debate, discussion and contestation. Because, we grow and evolve—cognitively and ethically—only when we overcome all sorts of 'professional' pretensions, and become transparent.
- 2 Perhaps I need to elaborate why modernity needs to be decolonised and radicalised. The trajectory of Western modernity was by no means free from its colonial project. That is precisely the reason that, during decolonisation, we noticed an ambiguous orientation towards Western modernity. There were nationalists who could see immense possibilities in science, technology and industry, but would always apprehend the danger of Western invasion in the domain of culture. In other words, they wanted to taste the gains of modernity without allowing it to affect their culture. Even a supposedly 'Western' modernist like Jawaharlal Nehru was not free from this ambiguity; he too was eager to 'discover' India, and experience its cultural strength and civilisational endurance. When I am speaking of the need for decolonising modernity, I wish to go further. I imagine a modernity that is free from the principles of domination and aggression. It would create a world in which we all would learn from the culture of dialogic conversation. Surely, it is not a finished product, it is a project one is striving for.
- 3 I am not suggesting that sociologists have always remained indifferent to this kind of study. I recall the contributions of great masters like Radhakamal Mukerjee, D P

Mukerji and A K Saran to the understanding of the cultural specificity of our modernity. Nevertheless, I would insist that sociology as a discipline needs to be more sensitive, and that there is no harm if our students (I am not talking about the highly specialised research scholars) read people like Nandy and Chatterjee in the same way as they read Beteille and Srinivas

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## Sociology as Regime: Between Sense and Anti-Sense

Sasheej Hegde

*Pressing at once upon questions of disciplinary specificity and substantive rearticulation, this paper examines the standards of reflexivity being brought to bear on an assessment of the practice of sociology (especially in India, but also elsewhere) The track pursued is primarily conceptual and methodological, and the same is further grafted onto a theme of a reflexive sociology of modernity This recounting of the spaces and grounds of discipline and history alternates between contending conceptions of the matter and, implicated on the terrain of sociology per se, translates into a conception of the latter as regime*

I take it that the very subject of our discussion is a translation and expression of the crisis that the discipline we practice and profess, namely, sociology, is currently undergoing Also, that our choice of this subject is conditioned by the appearance of a conception of the discipline that, breaking with all previous modalities of inscription, makes sociology an intellectual—or, better still, logico-historical—creation Contemporary agendas see in sociology a *regime* that is indissociable from a substantive conception of the ends of social science, and from a view, and an aim, of the type of modernity that corresponds to it It is also easy to see that, whatever the philosophical or historical window dressing, a substantive conception of the discipline itself originates in the crisis of the imaginary significations that concern the idea of modernity and aims at covering over this ground by implicating all discussion about this idea in the ‘cultural’ (read ‘institutional’) form of the discipline, and, ultimately, even by suspending that reference The deep-seated connection between this conception and what is problematically called ‘historical social science’ is quite manifest, and I will return to it But let me begin at the beginning I have designed a developmental sequence for this paper, which while working off extant formulations about sociology in India and sociology *in general* also grafts onto the theme of modernity *per se* as part of a

singular and reflexively articulated matrix of retrieval of an idea of sociology as regime

### Pathways through Sociology

In a short statement, written not very long ago, Anthony Giddens, the influential British sociologist, wondered of his discipline 'Is it a discipline without a common conceptual core, in danger of breaking into unconnected specialities? And have the most innovative authors moved elsewhere? Most important of all, perhaps, has it lost its cutting edge?' (1996 5) He goes on to argue that, while sociologists should focus their attention on 'the practical and policy-making implications of the changes currently transforming social life', the discipline would become 'dreary and quite possibly disaggregated, if it didn't also concern itself with the big issues' (*Ibid* 7) The big issue for Giddens, of course, is globalisation (a 'runaway world', as he characterises it elsewhere) 'Social life has become episodic, fragmentary and dogged with new uncertainties, which it must be the business of creative sociological thought to help us understand' (*Ibid* 6)

More recently—and cutting back to our own situation, namely, sociology in India—my younger contemporary and disciplinary colleague, Satish Deshpande complained that 'most discussions on "Indian sociology"—especially on its intellectual history, theoretical orientations and so on—actually refer only to a few elite universities, research institutions and scholars', and that 'unless they are specifically about "regional" contexts, these discussions usually ignore the most common concrete instance of the practice of "Indian sociology", namely, its *teaching* in hundreds of undergraduate colleges and three or four score universities all over the country' (2001 248) According to him, it is important to think of disciplinary locations as not only 'the site of one's questions and interventions, but also as the place of accountability' (*Ibid* 247) Deshpande, of course, is not making an argument about elitism as such, rather, as the following effusion delivers 'to provide a picture of the specific contexts and contrasts that are implicit in the abstraction "Indian sociology" as different from similar abstractions like "Malaysian sociology" or "Indonesian sociology"' (*Ibid* 256) To be sure, the rhetoric is not exhausted by these words, but one brief sample is sufficient for my point

The contention may lack the rotundity of Giddens, it is, nevertheless, on its level another manifestation of an argument deployed in widely different historical situations Not a sophisticated argument, to be sure,

and an argument that is easily caricatured. But I suppose a high level of sophistication is not a necessary condition for effectiveness. The appeal to the peculiar predicaments that have defined Indian sociology and anthropology satisfies the requirement that it must seem rational and persuasive, that both its proponents and those they persuade could, if pressed, defend themselves in terms of the need to, in Deshpande's words, '(re)position institutions and their practices' (*Ibid* 247). It is, therefore, a legitimate historical exercise to examine the argument seriously, as I now propose to do.

Particular explanations for the recurrence of this class of argument are not hard to find. I myself suggested, in a paper published long ago (Hegde 1989), that, while it is comforting to do a sociology of knowledge, it is necessary to go beyond simple assertions about the existential determination of knowledge, and that the thrust should be to provide a glimpse of the logic (both epistemic and 'practical') pervading the discipline of sociology in India. I worked through various analyses and assessments of the sociology in and of India and, rather than viewing these accounts as reflecting the opinions of their authors, took them as embodying the dispositions, strategies and ways of perceiving reality that are taken for granted within the discipline. In keeping with this procedure, I advocated a *discursive core* as the key to the practice of sociology in India, and noted its urge to homogenise and pragmatise the ontological domain of India. Alternatively, I wrote that there is hardly any serious attempt at posing the central issue of the ontological status of sociology, in particular to formulate 'sociology' as a problem in the history of ideas. Two points favoured this line of analysis: it seemed to work successfully, and its nature is almost strictly procedural (or, better still, pedagogic). Whether or not one accepts this analysis, its power lies in what may be termed its 'calculation', that is to say, its detailing of the epistemic content and strategic locus of the discursive core sustaining the practice of sociology in India. With this construct—in contrast, say, to the treatment accorded by either Giddens or Deshpande (I will return to aspects of their ground presently)—the institutional aspect of the sociological programme was either neglected or presumed while taking the intellectual part of that programme as primary and special.

Obviously, we cannot ignore these axes of problematisation in re-orienting curricular agendas in sociology. This becomes clear when, for instance, in the limited context of formulating a defence of sociology, Giddens sets out to prove the assumed universal interpretability of the formulas he elaborates as kind of rules for the centrality of sociology.

within the social sciences 'Sociologists, don't despair! You still have a world to win, or at least interpret' (1996 7) Thus, he confronts a new challenge, namely, to show how 'most of the debates that grab the intellectual headlines today, across the social sciences, and even the humanities, carry a strong sociological input' and that 'more than any other intellectual endeavour, sociological reflection is central to grasping the social forces remaking our lives today' (*Ibid* 6) To be thus related, different situations of sociology (say, sociology in the United States of America or Europe, or even British sociology) must be not only comparable to one another, but also operational in a reverse manner to fulfil the claim of universal interpretability, because while 'everything in the sociological garden isn't rosy—although was it ever?— it would be difficult to argue that sociology is off the pace intellectually, especially if one broadens the angle again and moves back to a more international perspective' (*Ibid*) Since the problem of articulating a defence of sociology can evidently no longer be solved in the common functional fashion of generalisations, that is, by stating what is identical across national situations, Giddens understands it to be the business of a sociologist to grasp the social forces remaking our modernity today, although sociology is hereby noticeably made dependent upon contemporary globalisation in a way that is technically no longer controllable

Here begins Deshpande's undertaking—or even mine, not quite the one you are now encountering, but the 1989 prognosis—to answer the question of sociology as regime, explicitly in terms of a programme of reference and by means of a notation inscribing the idea of an 'intellectual field' and of disciplines as 'sites of enunciation' or 'regimes of articulation' In doing so, there is an adherence in principle to the organisability of the project and, by extension, to the programmatic approach to this task The functional ramifications of this task, however, can now come to the fore since Deshpande especially is concerned to answer the question of sociology as regime without recourse to the form of the discipline (or what I have termed elsewhere, in a contribution jointly written with Seemanthini Niranjana [2003], the fact of disciplinary positioning) On the one hand, their place is now taken by the idea of the institutional framework of academic production, as the formal counterpart to the expressly assumed content orientation of disciplinary history On the other hand, we find a polarity between—or an oscillation around—the *institutional contexts of and constraints on interested action* and the *institutional contexts of both interests and actors* (the summation is mine own and, therefore, the emphasis) Consequently, the incorporation of a special level of predication



that adduces to the 'constitutive' rather than merely 'constraining' logic of disciplines 'We cannot be sure that the trajectory of Indian sociology would have been very different had its internal composition been otherwise' (Deshpande [2001 252], noting the disciplinary tilt of Indian sociology towards anthropology) The argument, at any rate, is also tacked on to an imperative of offering a more nuanced mapping of locations The argument chiefly, as Deshpande alludes, is that 'further questions about who or what Indian sociology is *for*, who it is practised *by*, or where its theories and methods come *from* are unavoidable today' (*Ibid* 254) Hence, the institutional mediations—or, in the terms of that older analysis that I no longer subscribe to, namely, the idea of discursive deviations—are to be taken into account since it is these mediations and deviations that enable a grasp of what is already there within the practice of the discipline

Apparently, this analysis seems to amount to *nothing but* reproducing tautologies But, why 'nothing but', one might ask? Because, the argument is about the enduring consequences of institutional definitions of disciplinarity, particularly those consequences that have survived the institution of the regime itself Moreover, by introducing further agendas that themselves encounter previously introduced agendas, and thus overdetermined spheres of practice, the argument notices with mock surprise that within the evolved disciplinary regime agendas at once appear as forming and deforming The question implicates, it seems to me, the method of genealogy grounding the analysis in question

### Of Genealogy and 'Historical Social Science'

The genealogical analysis of disciplinary regimes as institutionalised forms is often marked by a tendency not to pursue the argument beyond the establishment of connections and consequences Even that contemporary icon of genealogical analysis, Michel Foucault is not immune, and one sometimes has the feeling that, in the fascination for 'locating' systems of thought and practice, he for the moment forgets to pose the question of form and credibility<sup>1</sup> A genealogy—as indeed a sociology—of truth is important, I guess, on any register, but, surely, there is a difference between assertions to the effect that 'there are no facts, only interpretations' and making the same point in deflationist terms, allowing that there are plenty of facts and nonetheless insisting that to identify anything as a fact is itself to make an interpretation Indeed, this is a good way to think of that inspirer of modern genealogy, namely, Friedrich

Nietzsche, and his progeny such as Foucault. In fact, the mature position of these thinkers is best translatable in the foregoing deflationist terms. It would also necessitate recasting the idea of genealogy as a problem of narrative, a narrative (historical, fictional, or personal) whose shaping can be animated by the impulse to get at the truth. What follows in the rest of this section, but more insistently in the next, have a bearing on precisely this narrative point.

The method of genealogy, besides, does not rely exclusively on the combinability of the introduced and designated agendas warranted by its narrative structure—the mode of its writing, that is, or the forces determining its specific structure at a given moment in time—but also depends on a specific content level to have the effects of power-knowledge that are postulated of it. This content level, though, becomes (or is) only relevant to the search operations of the genealogical mode insofar as content can be assessed. Systems of relations come to be posited on the condition of connectivity (or consequence) as long as the combinations, howsoever made and/or judged, can be related to ‘schemes of dispersion.’ What does this figure of dispersion now mean for the method of genealogy? In this respect, the archaeological axis of Foucault’s early work becomes dependent on decisions, and genealogical ones at that (cf. Dreyfus and Rabinow 1982 *passim*). However, this does not imply that the openness of states of discourse or practice is recognised—an openness that would have to be ‘taken care of’ (*sic*) by means of the number and diversity of events. When I discuss the deep-seated connection between the substantive conception of the sociological discipline and what is problematically called ‘historical social science’, momentarily in this section and more involved in the subsequent sections, I will keep returning to this point.

Broadly, genealogy replaces the distinction between subject and predicate with the one between function (read ‘power’ or ‘habitus’) and argument or assertion (read ‘knowledge’ or ‘field’). This is an abstraction that is regarded and dealt with as operable and generalisable and that, therefore, has a conceptualising effect. That way, it is true, the analysis of schemes of dispersion—or, to adhere to the vocabulary adduced in our previous section, namely, institutional mediations and/or discursive deviations—is freed from the subject-centred delimitations of a curiously sacralised history.<sup>2</sup> But, how then can the forms of disciplinary interrogation (and even disciplinary history) are to be salvaged as a logical and intellectual one? Year in and year out, to be sure, questions whether any of them is engaged in a process of knowledge gathering assail sociologists and social scientists generally.

Why is there a need to return persistently to the same issues. one might ask? For Pierre Bourdieu, as indeed for a whole cult of sociological practice that he has inspired, the answer lies in the fact that in the social sciences, 'the progress of knowledge presupposes progress in our knowledge of the conditions of knowledge' (1990: 1). The point, I think, is surely misstated, and not just for the problems adduced above with reference to the method of genealogy *per se*. It is not so much that we require *progress* in our knowledge of the conditions of knowledge as that we require anything at all that might plausibly pass for knowledge of the conditions of knowledge. In the natural sciences, for instance, what characterised our faith in their progress in gathering knowledge was not progress in our knowledge of the conditions of knowledge, but a conviction that, with regard to the conditions of knowledge, we did not need to know much more than what had been in place since the Enlightenment. That, of course, turned out to be an over-optimistic assessment of our grasp of the conditions of natural scientific knowledge, but it was (and is) an assessment for which there has been no ready analogue in the social scientific arena.

The question is: what is one to make of this? What kind of theoretical weight can it be given? The issue turns on the question of reflexivity in sociology and social science research, and bears upon a substantive conception of the sociological discipline itself. As always, let me work my way through an extant formulation. The analysis in question is the framework anchoring the Immanuel Wallerstein *et al.* authored Gulbenkian Commission report *Open the social sciences* (1996). I will not be pouring through this report however; instead, I propose to work through another condensation anchoring Wallerstein (2000):

'When we entered the nineteenth century', Wallerstein tells us,

neither social science nor sociology existed, at least in institutional form, or even as terms in intellectual discourse. When we entered the twentieth century, social science was a vague term encompassing a zone of intellectual concern, and sociology was the name of a nascent organised discipline that was beginning to receive official university sanction in a few Western countries (2000: 25).

He adds, 'As we enter the twenty-first century, sociology is an organised course of study in most universities of the world, but social science remains a vague term encompassing a zone of intellectual concern' (*Ibid.* 25).

The consolation that Wallerstein primarily has in mind is that which comes from an insistent questioning of what is termed 'the two cultures divide', namely, science versus philosophy/humanities. According to him, the emergence of what is termed the sciences of complexity within the natural sciences (and mathematics) and cultural studies have overseen a transformation in the world of knowledge—from a centrifugal to a centripetal model, centripetal in the sense that 'the two extremes (science and the humanities) are moving in the direction of the in-between centre (social science), and to some degree on the centre's terms' (*Ibid* 31). For Wallerstein, this is a moment of great responsibility, and he observes that 'perhaps social scientists can help to clarify the issues and thereby promote a new synthesis which would reunify the epistemological bases of the structures of knowledge' (*Ibid* 32). More pointedly, he maintains that sociology should be developed into a reunified 'historical social science' on a truly global scale.

What is going on? Such consolation is of its nature limited since, just as there is no escape from sociology itself, so there is no final escape from the judgements of practitioners and non-practitioners alike upon what is being posited as 'historical social science'. We cannot be in attendance at our own wake, and cannot hope finally to fix the form of our own reception, nor avoid the irksome truth that in any record we confront we shall betray more of our selfhood than we ourselves are sensitive to. What follows is another trajectory in a broader rectification that has been the thrust of this paper. In a word: between sense and anti-sense.

### Reflexivity and Disciplinary Practice

The issue concerns the nature of self-interpretation—or, on our terms, the standards of reflexivity being wrought upon the space of our disciplines—its logical and epistemological status particularly. This is a long-standing issue in the philosophy of social sciences, as indeed in the philosophy of mind.<sup>3</sup> A problem encountered in one form or another is that of reconciling the agent or participant's point of view with that of an outside observer. In both cases, I can add, it need not be exactly a question of privileging the reports from the first-person point of view so much as accounting for their distinctive logical status. It can be claimed, for instance, that the ordinary logical independence of description and its object is absent in such cases, thus compromising the self-description's status as a report. Alternatively, certain theories of social understanding (and I include even the history of ideas here) subsume the claim that self-interpretation, individual and

cultural (as indeed disciplinary), is not something external to and independent of its object, but constitutive of it. Even when presented as a methodological point, however, the claim is often defended by considerations of the sort that establish that the discovery of a genealogical link between, say, two thinkers or a school of thought is sufficient of itself to explain what the 'borrower' believed or felt or intended. Although there are undoubtedly different things to say about such phenomena on the disciplinary level, I should think that there is no element of necessity in this, which reflects a difference in possible relations between disciplines. What is more, this connection need *not* obtain because self-interpretation (again, reflexivity on our terms) is in any way logically constitutive of its object. Better understanding of this relation, I am convinced, requires clarity about the ends of disciplinary history, something that I am not sure we practitioners of the craft of sociology are willing to take into account.

It is also clearest on this level that my argument is not meant to rest on a wholesome idealism or constructivism. There is supposed to be something special about sociology, and the knowledge that issues off it or informs it, that makes what one might call the constitutive claim both plausible and impossible. The peculiarity of the discipline is that its formulations are constitutive of its object, *and* that these formulations can be right and wrong. This might seem to be a hedge on our part, but there is, I believe, more at stake here, for ourselves, for the self-images of our disciplinary practice. I must wade through extant formulations here, and am therefore unable to command the desired brevity and focus.

Claims about the objects and the methodologies of the social sciences take as their point of departure the theory that there are essential differences between the natural and the social sciences. One of the core arguments is that in the case of a person's self-interpretation (of, for instance, his emotional life) there is a special relation between awareness and the object of awareness such that the normal logical independence of knowledge and the object of knowledge no longer hold. The self-interpretation, it is claimed, is not simply a descriptive report, but is in some sense constitutive. In other words, the social sciences are dealing with an object of a special sort—they are concerned with 'self-interpreting animals' (to take the title of a famous paper by Taylor 1985a Ch. 2)—and the phenomena and practices that are the objects of particular social sciences are constituted by this interpretive activity. This fact makes for an important difference between the fully objective, independent objects of the natural sciences and the 'self-constituted' objects of the social science, and accordingly the claim is that a proper methodology of the latter will

reflect on this difference.<sup>4</sup> Such claims about a constitutive relation are presented, whether in argument or even casually, they are further phrased in terms of such activities as adopting new vocabularies, thickly describing a state of affairs or re-articulating one's state of affairs.

One obvious thing common to all such activities is the idea of coming to different beliefs about oneself, about the practice engaged in and/or about a given state of affairs. This change, however, need not challenge the status of the original emotion/perception as a 'fully independent object', only a different one has now replaced it. No object is so independent that it remains unaffected regardless of whatever else goes on in the world. What is more important, the *logical* independence of the original emotion/perception is not challenged by the fact that other things, including other thoughts, emotions and perceptions, affect it. The constitutive claim, then, should be understood conceptually or logically, and not causally. Indeed, that the constitutive claim can be (or ought to be) counterposed to a causal or psychological claim is plainly stated in Taylor. According to him, a social theory is 'not about an independent object, but one that is partly constituted by self-understanding', and the changes wrought by the adoption of such a theory are 'not a matter of some psychological effect of further information' (1985b: 98).<sup>5</sup> The resolutions, however, remain problematic.

In fact, there is an interesting commentary on aspects of Taylor's prognosis by the philosopher and historian of science, Thomas Kuhn (1998). For the latter, it is not a question of whether the social and the natural sciences are of the same kind, rather, 'how the line between the two enterprises might be drawn' (*Ibid.*: 129). Kuhn substitutes for Taylor's way of presenting the matter the idea that 'no more in the natural than in the [social] sciences is there some neutral, culture-independent set of categories within which the population—whether of objects or of actions—can be described' (*Ibid.*: 131). More pointedly perhaps, Kuhn insists that 'the natural sciences, [ ] though they may require what I have called a hermeneutic base, are not themselves hermeneutic enterprises' (*Ibid.*: 133), indeed, that while the social sciences are hermeneutic enterprises, one may still ask whether they are restricted to the hermeneutic, to interpretation. 'Isn't it possible that here and there, over time, an increasing number of specialities will find paradigms that can support normal, puzzle-solving research?' (*Ibid.*: 133).

Readers will obviously recognise this as a redevelopment of the point behind his opus, *The structure of scientific revolutions* (1970), extending to the sphere of the social sciences the logic of paradigms that support

normal, puzzle-solving research in the natural sciences. It has been sometimes claimed that Kuhn toned down his radical views after his opus, but this is palpably wrong. He did occasionally repudiate his earlier ideas, however, the bulk of his later work is a significant articulation and defence of his fundamental views and not a retraction. For example, he extends his Darwinian analogy, to describe a process resembling a biological speciation whereby both old and new scientific traditions may survive, as an alternative to the model of simple replacement through revolution. He also develops his account of the social dynamics of scientific communities, focusing especially on the way in which a period of scientific crisis may serve to spread cognitive risk, with different scientists following different avenues of inquiry (see Kuhn 2000).<sup>6</sup> Interesting as all this is, even more is the possibility that he is envisaging in the reflections called attention to in the previous paragraph. The possibility that paradigms (in Kuhn's sense of the term) could be operative in the social sciences as well is an exciting consideration for a methodologically grounded disciplinary history.

However, it might be asserted that this would be inflecting the reflexive point causally rather than conceptually or logically. Allow me a clarification before yielding to a more abstract plane of judgement about reflexivity and the representational realm of knowledge. In fact, until recently the most charged issue in the sociology of knowledge (as indeed the sociology of science) turned on the question of whether explanations of why a piece of knowledge or a scientific belief comes to be held should invoke the fact that the knowledge/belief is more or less true.<sup>7</sup> Today, it seems to me that there is an equally fraught, but less explicitly acknowledged, series of divisions whether particular social scientists (as also scientists) always plotted their research agendas and merely bided their time until it became a full-fledged or realisable project—what may be termed the 'intentionalist' view—or whether the academic project of X and Y took shape only gradually and in definable stages (the 'functionalist' interpretation). Likewise, there can be studies of knowledge that treat it as a discrete historical event, analysable in all its specificity and immanence like other historical occurrences, without the need to invoke extra-human capitalisations at all, whereas, there can be accounts in which what happened (or is happening) requires some larger categories. An analogous but logically independent division also exists between the impulse to limit interpretations of disciplinary practice to what they reveal about the institutions and peoples directly caught up in it as practitioners, bystanders, consumers and critics, versus more general claims like Shriv Visvanathan's,

say, that 'there is something antiseptic about Indian sociology. It has been marked by a search for competence, even exactitude but without achieving a deeper sense of the problematic. One can read twenty years of *Contributions to Indian sociology* and think that Mandal, Narmada, Bhopal or the turmoil in Punjab were all events that have not touched our social imagination' (2001: 3123). These differences reach deeper than the by now largely exhausted quarrel about the Indian sociology's uniqueness, and they cut across many of the more audible controversies in the field.<sup>8</sup>

It is worth spelling out the issues at stake in these divisions, because so often scholars who theorise about trends in the world of knowledge or about specific disciplinary practices want to have it both ways—they insist, that is, on drawing global conclusions from a practice whose specific characteristics they also regard as uniquely revelatory. A case in point is the investigations anchoring Wallerstein called attention to earlier. It may not be necessary to recapitulate this ground here, but if the possibilities of a sociology developed into (in Wallerstein's terminology) a reunified, 'historical social science' are at once so all-encompassing and fragile, then its pertinence has less to do with given identifiable competencies than with the identification of a theme (a problem) that has no legitimacy in terms of academic fields and which necessitates a new competency, a new type of research, and a new division of disciplines. If, on the other hand, the point is that of moving substantive concepts into the centre of sociological work all over the globe—that all work on the 'rationality' of knowledge would require judgements that are juridical, ethical, philosophical, psychological and sociological—then there is nothing especially revelatory about it. The themes of rationality and judgement are, strictly speaking, not localisable, and the fact that there can (and ought to) be many sociologies—and consequently substantial disagreements over what the concepts of sociology consist in—is neither here nor there. The principles invoked to account for particular disciplinary orientations can obviously not both be principles of *operation* and principles of *justification*. It is this latter construal which is of interest for a substantive appraisal of disciplines, whether it be sociology or even historical social science.

The themes of rationality and judgement may be the only locus where Western philosophical and theological reflections can still proceed untroubled by their own globalising impulses, and if there is a kind of unconscious European cultural imperialism in the ways that rationality is being used as a universal gauge for the conditions of life within history, this only shows how thoroughly the discourse about rationality and disciplines has been absorbed into the traditional terminology and



practices of the very systems whose assumptions it supposedly discredited.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps then there is another way of expressing the problem to which our recounting of the spaces and grounds of reflexivity and the discipline of sociology is drawing attention. It arises when we try to explain what it is that disagreement over the content and orientation of disciplines consists in (as separate from the question of who is holding up that discourse, who is taking up positions within it, and what is being received in the course of it).

One is here inclined to effect a modality of argument which might be summed up in the phrase 'No disagreement with conceptual agreement', and which the philosopher Bernard Williams has expressed more fastidiously as the need for an element in conflicting claims 'which can be identified as the locus of exclusivity' (1981: 135).<sup>10</sup> As should be discernible, some of our claims here have turned on this question of exclusivity, although, in so far as it does, we would present this precisely as a question of disciplinary commitments. Within the limits of any discussion about disciplinarity (or interdisciplinarity) it makes no difference which view is taken concerning the very important question of whether what counts is the attitude a discipline has or the attitude it would be reasonable for it to have. Quite inevitably, we have resisted the attempt to have it both ways, to have a foot as it were in both genealogy and epistemology. The problem is hard enough, considering that the issue—the question of reflexivity and the apportioning of disciplinary spaces, as also the possibility of cross-disciplinary fertilisations—appears to run, together different contexts in which it might be raised.

One recognises that there is a riposte to all this. But it is also the point where, maybe, a truer engagement could begin. Exactly what it comes to—just what line it is drawing between the perspectival and the absolute—is clearly sensitive to details of one's account of disciplinary spaces and the individuation of their contents. The main challenge, I think, concerns its generalisation. Trying to think about this possibility raises many questions about the extent to which a purely disciplinary capacity—grounding in one's own discipline, that is—could envisage such alternative perspectives, which by definition we cannot occupy. Notice that this is not a bar in principle, we cannot occupy temporal points of view in the distant past, but we can say perfectly well what they are like and work with them. This provides another variation on a theme that is familiar to philosophers through the works of Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Jürgen Habermas of how to dispel the air of paradox surrounding perspectivalism. The Kantian position that we have no way of knowing reality as it

really is, independently of the structuring framework we bring to experience, can be made to seem paradoxical, because, in order to be aware that its conception of the world is perspectival, the subject must already have stepped outside it and occupied a 'higher' (transcendental) vantage point outside the boundaries of that perspective<sup>11</sup>

### The Place of 'The Modern'

The above considerations need not entail a new modality of either representing disciplinary history or doing sociology/social science. They only complicate the relationship between a *received* movement of a discipline (the articulated structure of its practice) and an *executed* movement of a discipline (the wider space of discursive negotiation that sociologists and historians have sought to record). Between the two an interval can and needs to be established, whether it divides the received movement infinitely or prolongs it in a plurality of possible reactions. In what follows, therefore, it will be a question of taking advantage of this interval, or, more strictly speaking, it will be a question of interpolating ourselves in the object that one could regard as sociology's own, namely, 'modernity'.

All too often, disquisitions about change take the form of an evasion of the changes. I am not saying that this has to happen inevitably. Nevertheless, that change cannot be applied to any referent does not mean that it cannot be used for an act of reference. In this oscillation between a possible referent of change and the use of changes in an act of reference, there lurks an ambiguity that has been the cause of many debates on the ontology of reference. A problem that arises immediately is whether a set of changes can be interpreted and seen as consistent or inconsistent without bringing in something external to change. In other words, to move from a minimal registering of change to a robust conception of change, on any register, requires a mechanism of identification, a recapturing of change at an abstract level, what might be formulated herein as *terminus ad quo* (an analysis of the ways in which changes are produced) rather than *terminus ad quem* (an analysis devoted to the end-point of a process of change). On the crudest understanding of this interpretation—its difficulties and challenges notwithstanding—it is an attempt above all to comprehend change through modernity (the latter as something conjunctural) rather than the other way round. Allow me an elaboration.

It must be reiterated that the decision to state the problem of change thus requires, too, an acceptance of the applicability (at least for some purposes) of the reflective adequacy of the change itself (that is to say, its

normativity) To be sure, the identification of this normativity cannot depend solely upon the postulatory practice of the judgement, which is epistemically subsequent to formulation of the inferences and hence of the place itself, without an obvious circularity But, is a tautology here masquerading as a substantive thesis about the place of the modern? The problem is that most accounts remain within the tradition of an unreflexive sociology of modernity wherein, to echo P. Osborne, 'the attempt to establish what is new about "modern" societies fails to reflect upon the temporal coordinates and conceptual implications of this form of investigation itself' (1992: 68)

Undoubtedly, there is a slippage here, in the very terms of the opposition between 'modernity' and a (desired?) reflexive sociology of modernity that might be rephrased as 'conjunctural' analysis—that even as the complex and differential temporality of the latter reproduces the idea of modernity itself, conjunctural analysis remains an operation to be negotiated in context, not forsaken for the philosophically modern. Although remaining within the parameters of modernity's temporal matrix—Osborne (*Ibid.* 73-74) has the details—conjunctural analysis may involve a decisive mutation of the field as well. Broadly, this is what I meant earlier by an attempt above all to comprehend change through modernity rather than the other way round. To repeat, it is an analysis devoted less to the end-point of a process of change (*terminus ad quem*) than an analysis of the ways in which changes are produced (*terminus ad quo*). One need add here that all sociologies of modernity need not be quite reflexive in the sense being inscribed, though they may come across as part of a conjunctural analysis of particular transitions to modernity.

Taken together these comments not only make the point that there could be sociological accounts of modernity which operate at a different level of analysis from the concepts, say, of political economy (or even cultural studies), and argue more insistently than ever about 'the modern' as a primary secular category of historical totalisation. Granted that the historical and analytical importance of the modernity concept has (thus) been affirmed, the next question is: What can usefully be done to refine our grasp and application of the concept? In other words, what is the role we can be ascribing to (particular) 'theories of modernity'? This would necessitate a transfer of terms, even a shift of registers—from an analysis of words (or concepts) to an evaluation of frames or operations (what Kuhn called exemplars, or certain shared solutions to problems in one's disciplinary speciality)<sup>12</sup> I hope it is obvious that I am not taking a position on the origin—or *fate*—of the modern, and mean only to introduce

and motivate the problem of a self-grounding for any (or all) references to modernity. The point of such questions, nevertheless, returns us to the dilemmas anchoring our first two sections above. On the one hand, the self-understanding of sociology as a discipline of and about modernity suggests a degree of independence that threatens to beg the important question of cognitive legitimacy and creates irresolvable ground problems of the sort probed herein. On the other hand, more dialogic understandings of (shall we say) 'sufficient rationality'—ones that try to measure the legitimacy and justification of a discipline against the concrete theoretical options available at the time—threaten a historicism that undermines the whole issue of legitimacy in favour of the merely historically appropriate. This is, expectedly, a real issue for a reflexive sociology of modernity to consider.

I must hasten to point out—and particularly since I am often so confronted—that there is nothing postmodernist about either this construal or the order of its representation. 'Postmodernism' seems a convenient label to attach to standpoints that show a commitment to questions of form and method, strangely, it also betokens a refusal to engage the record.<sup>13</sup> Of course, there is more to 'postmodernism' than as a sort of virus afflicting contemporary academia. Let us get back.

### Theories of Modernity?

There need be no confusion, I believe, in thinking about sociology as being 'about' modernity, ideally, the ground(s) of modernity, but it would be entirely possible for philosophical confusion to arise from that idea of what all this is about. We might, for example, be puzzled how we can have epistemic contact with the ground(s) of modernity that are its subject matter. Much of the success or failure of current discussions of modernity lies in their role in the construction of this subject matter.

The straightforward property that most accounts usually ascribe to modernity is a capacity to create its normativity out of itself. They want right away to prove the existence of modernity either in terms of the intrinsic appeal of the normative content of a specific cultural form or in terms of the actualisation of some universal but dormant capacity for thought and action. This will ultimately commit them to either a cultural or an acultural theory of modernity respectively. In the words of Taylor (1999), this form of independent variation has been a great source of confusion in attempts to explain modernity. Taylor himself, in his opus *Sources of the self* (1989) adopts the 'cultural' kind of approach in his explication of the

modern identity as shaped by the ideals of inwardness, freedom, and the affirmation of ordinary life, whereas in the terms of an 'acultural' model, all cultures could, under suitable conditions, undergo the transition to modernity and, what is more, any culture could in principle serve as 'input' for the chosen 'culture-neutral' explanatory procedure. For Taylor, functionalism has been an influential theory of the 'acultural' kind, but theories that construe the transition to modernity as a rationalisation process have also tended to take this form. He specifically proposes that '(an) exclusive reliance on an acultural theory unfits us for what is perhaps the most important task of social sciences in our day: understanding the full gamut of alternative modernities which are in the making in different parts of the world' (1999: 165). But what is it to have—or work with—a 'theory' of modernity?

Controversies about when the West entered the modern period notwithstanding, a narrative about 'disenchantment', rationalisation and secularisation often comes to dominate the talk about modernity's distinctive features. The consequence of this narrative has been to make the disparate descriptions of modernity reconcilable and the individuation of modernities hard to discern. Paradoxically, this is what is being gestured at by means of the contrast between 'cultural' and 'acultural' theories of modernity. I say *paradoxically* because, for Taylor, 'not every mode of cultural distinctness is justified and good' (*Ibid.*), any plurality of culturally different alternative modernities should be subjected to the normative conditions of modernity itself. The entire process of this demonstration need not concern us here, and, to be sure, I am not accusing Taylor (or, more generally, such other lines of appraisal) of being caught in an ethnocentric bind. Such a charge, incidentally, can be attributed to Partha Chatterjee (1994: 228–39).<sup>14</sup> But, surely, what seems marked out by the context of this narration (I mean Taylor's) is that while certain images and contours might be particularly appropriate to each other—I have in mind here the binary instituted between 'cultural' and 'acultural' theories, that the tendency being ascribed to one could be attributed to the other as well—the content itself (of what is being inferred about modernity, namely, the capacity to create its normativity out of itself) is partially independent of either type of demarcation. Such a possibility precludes the proposal of substituting cultural theories for their acultural counterparts, and even urges that theories should be regarded as just one component, of no more defining importance than concepts, of the composite ideas which is the modernity in question today.

This, obviously, does not settle the issue, which concerns what one takes theories of modernity to commit one to. Osborne has this to say about the role of so-called 'theories of modernity' (as distinct from the more general theorisation of 'modernity' that he sketches) 'to provide a content to fill the form of the modern, to give it something more than an abstract temporal determinacy' (1992: 75). Likewise, it is a matter of disputation whether the concept of modernity requires such a principle, even as one admits that this requirement is fulfilled by 'theories of modernity'. A more searching set of questions, however, has to do with whether every case in which it appears as if a conceptual change is effected amounts to a change in the theory, what is involved in a conceptual change is not some truth about the world, but a rule for the use of an expression.<sup>15</sup> The prejudice, or principle, being placed under the scanner here can yet be shown to be problematic, for, if new configurations of 'modernity' will be uncovered in non-'Western' places—*vide* (say) the alternative modernities construct, or the vision of multiple modernities—then the impulse to *both* construe and deny universal history that undergirds what such variants of theories of modernity today are generalising about the space of modernity *per se* would have to be compromised. Taylor, of course, vacillates—and Osborne is silent on the question—and, surely, their insistence that everything should be subject to the normative conditions implored by modernity itself and/or that the concept of modernity remains our primary secular category of historical totalisation implies that nothing is self-evident or could on some ground be taken for granted.

The challenge, of course, would be to include the unity of this task into the property to be inferred, or at least deduce it as a consequence of that property. Since 'the modern', that is to say, the ways in which modernity is disposed to theorise itself, is a (transcendental?) precondition of the possibility of modernity, it must be demonstrable how it makes the latter, as also itself, possible. More abstractly, what is being reiterated here is that the burden of proof in contemporary expositions of constitutive conditions, as it were, must alternate between an understanding inscribing the specific historical reality of the present and a thought about just what is known or being willed when something is posited as modernity or 'the modern'. As such, the mark of modernity can be as controversial as the property to be inferred about it. If the available sociology of modernity is interpreted, as I think it must be, as being unable to put together a well-formed debate about the ground(s) of modernity, this cannot be ascribed to the *whole* enterprise of historicisation, which in

some form or other could be said to have been (always) so concerned<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, my claim is different that if this mark of a reflexive modernity has failed to obtain, it is because the question of the ground(s) of modernity has hardly found an established place

In one way, this is right, and perhaps the end of the matter The point to stick to or emphasise is that the operations herein can be still fully cognitive The complications stem from the fact that it seems to be adducing to a level of normativity that goes beyond, if you will, 'preconditions' (plainly, the histories of what led up to something) and 'effects' (the aggregate of the changes which that something causes or that unfolds with respect to it) and held to underlie the historical study of socio-political forms In other words, to have stated that there is something about modernity (or even multiple modernities) that can and needs to be known is not yet to ask how it is that our descriptions of it (the theory which makes particular accounts of modernity more than just a heuristic device for identifying the space of the modern) are themselves over-determined by what we can and need to know about modernity

### A Concluding Consideration

It is by now almost a commonplace that, whenever one produces any unit of discourse, one is necessarily doing many different things at once, that is to say, there are many descriptions under which one's action may be brought Displaced on to the terrain of sociology *per se*, it is a feature of this mode of thought that it is never severed from the discursive context of its existence As such, we sought to work out some more or less complex combination or interplay of the different dimensions attaching to an idea of sociology as regime, especially by constructing a context of response within which the modalities of doing a disciplinary history could take on some more clearly delineated significance In one way or another, at any rate, the thematic of sociology as regime may come to be treated not simply as an object of discussion, but as belonging to the conditions of production of reflexivity itself Attention comes to be placed as much on the things that happen (the *content* of disciplines) as on the fact that they happen (the *event* of disciplines) Note that this double constraint on the subject of disciplines comes up elsewhere in the space of modernity—*vide* the distinction alluded to above between *terminus ad quo* and *terminus ad quem*—although the issues, surely, are much more complicated than what this condensation would permit

If we are to make the required sense of the question—and I am here paraphrasing a possible response to the axiomatic inscribing our study—‘Is sociology as regime capable of constituting the whole of that which is the object of its self-interrogation, namely, modernity?’ we have to read it, as ‘Is a reflexive sociology of modernity necessary for scripting an idea of sociology as regime?’ To this question, most would answer ‘no’—or ‘not necessarily’—and answering so, supposes that an explanation could occur without addition to, or other change in, that condition to which the explanation is a response. Alternatively, we need to consider whether this allusion to levels of reflexivity entails that the case is being overstated. The crucial distinction here (howsoever problematic) is between necessary and sufficient conditions, and within the former between thinking of something as itself an essential part of a complete description and thinking of it as identical with the condition of being described—the condition that takes us from what describes, at one end, to explanation/understanding, at the other.

The imperative, of course, is inscribing an analysis that claims for itself the characteristics of its object of study, namely, modernity. Context matters, but neither inevitably nor self-evidently.

## Notes

An earlier version of this paper was prepared for the March 2002 Workshop on ‘Sociology as Praxis: Issues of Curriculum and Teaching in Indian Universities’ organised by the Department of Sociology, University of Pune. Owing to developments on the personal front, I could not attend the Workshop. The paper was taken up for discussion however, and I am most grateful to Professors Sujata Patel and D N Dhanagare for the interest evinced. To the former especially, I owe a further note of thanks for the invitation in the first place.

- 1 The idea implicates another method of appraisal of Foucault’s work on discursive and non-discursive regimes, and whose overall protocols are assessed for their normative confusions by, among others, Taylor (1985b: Ch 6). That they take on a more involved and hermeneutical cast—and therefore invoke considerations not entirely borne out in and by this analysis—is only to be noted. The ideas discussed also have a currency in determining the precise limits of Bourdieu’s notion of ‘intellectual field’ as well.
- 2 One need only read Bédelle (2002) for a taste of this sacralising disposition.
- 3 My thoughts on the question have been clarified greatly by Moore (1997), though I am pushing it in directions that philosophers, both those opening up to the social sciences and those who do not, might not be inclined to. See also Hegde (1994).
- 4 Taylor is perhaps among the best English-speaking sources for tracking a more complex argument about both the objects and the methodologies of the social



sciences Taylor, of course, combines claims about social life with claims about language (see the essays reproduced in his 1985 a and b)

- 5 I realise that the word 'cause' is ambiguous. There are 'productive' causes, and there are, what can be called, 'formal' causes. The former includes the circumstances surrounding anything necessary for its production and emergence. The latter, formal causes, are a matter of what the thing is, and this cannot be determined solely by the circumstances necessary for its bare being. There can be many productive causes of the same sort of effect. But what causes (in the second sense) anything to be what it is can be an abiding condition. Important as these points are, they need not weigh on the considerations being forwarded in the text. The question I leave open—whether the circumstances in which ideas emerge, or out of which they are produced, are not sufficient to determine what they are or what they mean—is nevertheless important, and has a bearing on what follows in the text.
- 6 Interestingly, Kuhn here also narrows and deepens his notion of incommensurability. To say that two theories are incommensurable means that there is no scientific language which can fully express both. Incommensurability is untranslatability. Theories on either side of a revolution divide the world in systematically different ways, so that while it may be possible to become 'bilingual', the meanings of the incommensurable sentences resist principled translation into a common language. Kuhn makes clear that this does not involve any irrationality; he is simply trying to show how complex the rationality of scientific inquiry may become during periods of radical change. The long interview with Kuhn, featured in his 2000, is a fascinating read, documenting how the history of science was for him from the very beginning a vehicle for philosophical inquiry.
- 7 Thus, for instance, what came to be formulated as a 'strong programme' in the sociology of science—that explanations of why a scientific belief comes to be held should *never* invoke the fact that the belief is more or less true, that accounts of science should not depend on how the world is, only what scientists do, how they interact in their communities and the larger social interests that they serve (see Bloor 1999, see also Latour and Woolgar 1999). For the sociology of knowledge, see Susser (1989). While noting the internal compulsion driving the sociology of knowledge towards a radicalisation impinging directly on epistemology, the latter addresses voices that objected in principle to a sociology of knowledge. See Pickering (1996) for a useful introduction to the field of these questions.
- 8 Recent issues of the *Contributions to Indian sociology* are a case in point, marked out by an even more characterless pluralism than the one for which it was often criticised. Note, this is not a claim either about disciplinary purity (and its loss thereof) or scholarly productivity (and its concomitant excesses).
- 9 For a contrary perspective, but one directly conflating an intentionalist reading of institutions and disciplines with their functionalist repertoires, see Lal (2002). Lal's entire disquisition substantivises the whole terrain of social sciences in terms of the totalising conditions of modern knowledge. Wallerstein's appraisal echoes this same totalising thrust for the sociological discipline, but 'remain(s) enough of a child of the Enlightenment to believe that reflection can be useful and consequential' (2000: 35).
- 10 Williams, of course, is straddling another ground of discourse, namely, relativism (and specifically conceptual relativism). An apparent disagreement over a substantive issue will vanish if the parties concerned are arguing after all over the application of different concepts.

- 11 This is not the place for an exhaustive historical treatment of the question, but a crucial aspect of the disciplinary rubric of German philosophy is devoted to this theme (see Roberts 1992)
- 12 'Exemplar' captures the most important sense of Kuhn's famous multivalent term 'paradigm'. The function of problem sets is not to test students' knowledge but to engender it, similarly, exemplars guide research scientists in their work, for although, unlike rules, they are specific in content, they are general in their import. Scientists will choose new problems that seem similar to the exemplary ones, will deploy techniques similar to those that worked in the exemplars, and will judge their success by the standards the exemplars exemplify
- 13 For an assessment of postmodernism as it bears upon history and the historical method see Himmelfarb (1992). See also Ahmad (2000) for another ground of appraisal
- 14 It is significant that Chatterjee is targeting Taylor, a scholar at the foreground of understanding the ethnocentricity that grips contemporary thought. For Chatterjee, a critique of Europe's modernity—which would also entail engaging with the pitfalls of its normative promise—remains the most demanding intellectual task
- 15 My use of the term 'conceptual change' is meant to be loose, how loose, however, is not clear. I hope to work on this soon. Impinging on the point, of course, is Kuhn (1970)
- 16 If the discourse surrounding aspects of the question has been contrived, it has also been marred by partisan views by both modernity's protagonists and its antagonists. I have elsewhere covered some of this ground (Hegde 2000). In fact, fragments of the argument recapitulated here have been presented more fully in that contribution

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## **Reflections and Mobilisations: Development as Global Responsibility**

**Ananta Kumar Giri**

*Development has been subjected to deconstructive critiques as well as reconstructive formulations in which both critical reflections and mobilisations have played an important role. Yet scholars and activists rarely engage themselves simultaneously with both. This paper pleads for such an engagement, interrogating, broadening and deepening the very categories themselves. It urges us to realise that, while critical reflections suffer from a narrow Euro-American bias and a global banality of patriotism, mobilisations in the field of development are confined only within socio-political movements and now need to open themselves to socio-spiritual mobilisations as well. It discusses both socio-political movements such as Attac (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens) in Europe and the anti-mining struggle in Kashipur, Orissa and socio-spiritual mobilisations such as Swadhyaya, in whose work we get the glimpses of reconstitution of development as global responsibility.*

### **The Problem: Crisis of Interventionist Development and the Calling of Global Responsibility**

The discourse and practice of development are at a critical juncture now. The idea of development in its present interventionist mode had originated, at the end of World War II, as a new vision of hope against the backdrop of the devastating experiences of the war and the growing process of decolonisation. Then the idea of development shaped new forms of political responsibility on a global scale, it led to many applications. Now, after more than fifty years of application, development has gradually lost its appeal and vitality. We now face a crisis in a foundational way and in terms of major transformations in the world of development, both at the macro level and in our daily routines. This crisis is manifest in many

fields in the declining commitment to human development on the part of state and international donor agencies, destruction of public space and institutions without parallel efforts to reconstitute them, a growing militarisation of the state and society, and the increasing cynicism among all concerned

One major aspect of our contemporary crisis is the growing gap between action and reflection. Within the world of action we witness a transition from development interventions as expressive of specific political responsibility towards a notion of development in which the issue of manageability has taken central stage. The focus of moral and political reasoning has shifted from goals to results. In the world of reflection we have seen a shift from the modernist faith in development to the post-modern, deconstructive critiques of it. However, both these shifts are within the frames of 'liberty', 'rights' and 'justice' discourses of modernity, and both lack a transformational engagement with the emergent discourse and practice of responsibility. This constitutes a foundational problem which contemporary shifts in development—either from the political masters to managers, or from development as hope-generating machine to development as dystopia—are completely unreflective about. For example, when the neo-liberal advocates propound a market redefinition of development, or deconstructive critics, a Foucauldian critique of development as hegemony (see Escobar 1995), we are still operating with development as rights and justice. However, what needs to be understood is that the rights and justice frames of reference had emerged in specific historical circumstances, and that now these frames need to be radically and transformationally supplemented by a practice and perspective of responsibility.

The crisis in daily routines and paradigms of development that we now face can be better illumined if we relate this to our clinging to only 'rights' and 'justice' frames of modernity and lack of willingness to accept the calling of responsibility. In his provocative work, *Discourse and knowledge: The making of enlightenment sociology*, Piet Strydom (2000) helps us understand this foundational problem. For Strydom, the rights frame had emerged in the early modern revolutions, for example the Revolt of the Netherlands, the English Revolution and the French Revolution. The justice frame had arisen in the wake of Industrial Revolution in 'late 18th century England and continued unabated yet in a sublimated form until the second half of the 20th century, focused on the problem complex of exploitation, pauperisation and loss of identity' (*Ibid* 20). These two discourses have inspired and influenced socio-political

movements in the modern world, including interventions of development, but they have their limits in coming to terms with the emergent challenge and calling of responsibility. In Strydom's pregnant formulations, 'The theory of justice is today making way for another, still newer semantics in the form of the moral theory of responsibility which is crystallising around a number of intertwined debates about the problem of risk' (*Ibid*).

Thus, the calling of responsibility constitutes a critical juncture, one heightened by the rise of a risk society, both locally and globally. In fact, problems of poverty, rights, injustice and now the valorised problem of terrorism can be looked at as part of our risk condition. However, our approach to such risks has to be one of responsibility, a responsible engagement. The calling of responsibility here is a broad-based one in which all the relevant actors—the state, market, social movements/voluntary organisations, and self—have a role to play and in fact are called upon to embody their responsibility in a spirit of autonomy and interpenetration. In this there is a need for transforming development as *freedom* to development as *responsibility*, because freedom discourse, important and indispensable as it is, is still incapable of undertaking the suffering that the self needs to undertake to fulfil its responsibility to others (see Levinas 1974, Sen 1999). The plea for reconstitution of development as responsibility is neither a plea for locating responsibility outside nor colluding with the contemporary neo-liberal politics of irresponsibility in which the downtrodden and the victims of the systems are singularly blamed for their miseries. It is a plea for a multi-dimensional transformation in which all actors concerned in the field of development are engaged.

Responsibility here does not mean only political responsibility, but also ethico-moral and spiritual responsibility, embodying co-responsibility.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, modes of responsible engagement do not emerge only from the public sphere, as Strydom (1999) seems to suggest in a Habermasian mode, but involves practices of self-cultivation including spiritual mobilisation of self and society. It is the perspective and practice of responsibility emerging from multidimensional practices of care of self, looking up to the face of the other, and being part of conversations and civil labour in the public sphere, that constitutes the moral critique of development—*development as responsibility* that this essay wishes to present.

The field of development has been subjected to a Foucauldian critique in the works of scholars such as Arturo Escobar (1995) which valorises political criticism. This now needs to be supplemented by a moral critique and perspective of reconstructive responsibility. A moral critique, how-

ever, does not proceed with an opposition between politics and morality, it contains interpenetrative critical moments and possibilities between politics and morality acknowledging the limits of an either-or-approach, and always inspired by a beyond, a transcendence that exists within these immanent domains. With this perspective of reconstructive responsibility in mind, this paper asks whether the contemporary redefinition of development in terms of Amartya Sen's (1999) 'functioning' and 'capability' is adequate to the challenge of developing one's mind and heart.

This paper outlines two domains of responsibilities that reflections and mobilisations in the field of development face: (1) the challenge of a transcivilisational dialogue on development, and (2) the challenge of realising global justice and peace. It discusses socio-political and socio-spiritual movements in whose works we get the glimpses of reconstitution of development as global responsibility. Without presupposing a dualism between socio-spiritual and socio-political movements, it describes the significance of the socio-spiritual mobilisation of Swadhyaya and the socio-political movements such as Attac (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens) in Europe and the anti-mining struggle in Kashipur, Orissa fighting against corporate globalisation. Swadhyaya brings a new cultural and civilisational perspective on development than offered by the Enlightenment model of human development, which the interventionist models of development are now striving to globalise with the force of money and power. This paper describes the violence in such a globalisation of world view and pleads for a transcivilisational and transcultural dialogue on development. It submits that such a transcivilisational dialogue calls for mutual interrogation and open-ended learning where we are concerned not only with issues of application and justification, but prepare ourselves to undertake suffering for peace, justice and renewing development as practices of hope. This, the paper argues, is essential to rethinking and reconstituting our responsibility in and to the world after the violent turbulence of 'September 11'.

### **Broadening and Deepening the Meaning and Practice of Development: Socio-Spiritual Mobilisations and the Calling of a Transcivilisational Dialogue**

Swadhyaya is a socio-spiritual movement in contemporary India which also operates globally—in Africa, the Caribbean, England, the USA (see Giri 2000). Swadhyaya means the study of self, but in this movement efforts in self-study and self-development are intimately connected with

being with others in many experimental ways Swadhyaya does not believe in an interventionist mode of development It has varieties of activities which can be called community development projects, but that would be an externalist representation of the vision and practice of Swadhyaya Swadhyaya calls these *prayogas* (experiments)—experiments that facilitate self-development of participants in an experimental ground of working and being together, where the self is attuned to both the higher self within and the other self standing laterally *Bhaktipheri* (devotional travel) and *shramabhakti* (devotional labour) are the foundation of Swadhyaya In *bhaktipheri*, the Swadhyayees go from place to place and spend time with each other In *shramabhakti*, the Swadhyayees offer devotional labour in experimental grounds of self-development and collective well-being For example, in villages where Swadhyaya is active, there is a *prayoga* called *Yogeswara Krishi* (Lord's farming) in which the Swadhyayees cultivate with their own labour a piece of land taken on a lease on a cooperative basis The produce of this experiment is treated as *apoureshaya laxmi* (impersonal wealth) and it is utilised for addressing the needs of the community Through such a generation of impersonal wealth from varieties of experiments, some of which exist at a supra-village level For instance, the experiments of *Sri Darshanam* and *Brukha Mandir* bring people together for offering of devotional labour from more than twenty villages The Swadhyayees also learn to overcome the bindings of a narrow economic reason and learn to relate to wealth in a non-possessive way, a learning that can transform the contemporary discourse of social capital (see Putnam *et al* 1993) In the contemporary discourse, social capital is primarily thought of in rational terms However, rationality is not enough in tackling the problem of individualism, atomism and the tendency to free-ride in contemporary societies In Swadhyaya, trust is a value in itself, a value generated and strengthened in networks of relationships A dialogue with Swadhyaya can help us to understand the significance of practical spirituality in the generation and renewal of social capital (see Dore 1997, Dasgupta and Serageldin 2000)

For its work, Swadhyaya does not accept any grant from the state or multilateral donor agencies or philanthropists It generates wealth and well-being from the time and labour that participants bring to these experimental grounds of mutual nurturance Here we witness a new attempt to realise value from our own time and labour without the mediation of money and market and without beseeching the support of donor agencies for starting rural or tribal development work in one's area Realising development as a shared global responsibility calls for a new



relationship to time and labour—a time that is not just what Martin Heidegger calls a ‘clock time’, but a lived time, and labour that is not teleologically geared only to earning money for oneself, but becomes a means of taking part in a shared world of working together for a new hope, for a new beginning (Dallmayr 2000b). We find glimpses of a new relationship to time and labour in Swadhyaya made possible by a spiritual mobilisation of tradition. Swadhyaya does not believe in the post-traditional telos of modernity, the telos that guides the discourse of development too, that tradition is necessarily a barrier to be overcome in development. Rather, there are many spiritual resources in traditions that can be creatively mobilised for alternative development at the contemporary juncture (see Dhanagare 2003). In such mobilisations, unlike Anthony Giddens (1999) and Jürgen Habermas (1993), justification of faith is carried out not through rational argumentation alone, but also through one’s participation in concrete projects of practical spirituality which are embodiments of aesthetic and ethical projects of love. Love of God as simultaneously love of self and love of the world is at the heart of such an initiative in development that helps us to understand the calling of a new dialectic of transformation that Roy Bhaskar has recently presented to us: ‘The dialectics of de-alienation (of retotalisation) are all essentially dialectics of love, of love of self (Self), of each and all (Totality) and in both inner and outer movements, both as essentially love of God [ ] and God, we could say, is not essentially love but essentially to be loved’ (2000: 44).

In Swadhyaya, the practical work of development and spirituality are not separated from each other, but here combining love of God with love of the world is not free from ambiguity, tension and contradiction (see Touraine 2001). The followers of Swadhyaya make a distinction between God’s work and social work: for them, contributing to development of human mind and heart through various life-elevating projects is an aspect of God’s work, while building new roads is an aspect of social work. This distinction has not enabled Swadhyaya to come to terms with concrete challenge of social development in local communities such as repairing dilapidated roads, building cowsheds, and stopping the encroachment of village common land by influential landlords, not to mention its hesitance to denounce communal carnage carried out in the name of religion publicly. But, here the followers of Swadhyaya appeal us to rethink the very meaning of development. During one of my fieldwork journeys to Gujarat, the state where Swadhyaya is most active, I was once asked ‘Is building road the only meaning of development? Developing mind,

intellect and heart of human beings—is it no development?’ This question of Pappot Bhai, an inspiring leader of Swadhyaya, could be asked to the project of development which, despite its shift from economic development to human development, does not have within itself any striving for development of human heart

In fact, Fred Dallmayr (1998) asks such a foundational question Should development participate in what he calls ‘Enlightenment Black-mail’ and the Western models of economic development and rationality, or be a critical hermeneutic effort in understanding the limitations of such a philosophical and historical starting point and undertake efforts to create new spaces of self-development and mutual flourishing? He tells us that in Europe itself there was also another tradition of *Bildung* that emphasised self-cultivation in development, a cultivation that simultaneously aimed at authentic humanisation and divinisation<sup>2</sup> The ideal of *Bildung* is not confined to the classical German period, but is to be found virtually in every culture having stories or mythical-religious narratives that emphasise the ‘process of divine human formation’ But, ‘how much of these older stories of formation, culture (*Bildung*), and self-development still lives in contemporary conceptions of social development?’ (*Ibid* 245) Thus, cross-cultural dialogue on the meaning of development, where we seek to understand the contingency of not only our social locations but also our values, is an important task here Applying the insights of self-cultivation, Dallmayr tells us ‘With specific reference to global development, formation (*Bildung*) postulates an open-ended encounter between societies and cultures, a reciprocal learning process animating a “global village” continuously in the throes of formation’ (*Ibid* 14) In such an engagement with development as a cross-cultural striving for human flourishing, we need to build on alternative traditions of spiritual humanisation However, bringing these voices to the contemporary discourse of development requires a memory-work, an act of courageous remembrance and contemporary restitution In the words of Dallmayr,

This path of humanisation [as charted by Confucius and Herder] offers the potential for renewal that is never cut loose from historically sedimented moorings and situated vernacular beliefs To avoid rupture, what is needed along this path is memory-work, attention to the still untapped resources of the past, in our time of rapid globalisation with a bent toward global amnesia such memory-work emerges as a crucial requisite for the preservation of critical humanness (*Ibid* 11)

Thus, to take part in development as a global conversation, we cannot ignore the task of cross-cultural and cross-civilisational dialogue on development. Such a dialogue should not be yet another exercise in imposing the dominant conception of human development as propagated by contemporary triumphal capitalism, but an engagement in 'mutual interrogation and interpellation' where 'a distinct life-form—a concrete mode of 'being-in-the world'—opens itself up to the challenge of otherness in a manner yielding a deeper, transformative understanding of self and other' (*Ibid* 6-7). In this dialogue, we should also overcome the contemporary tempting logic of the clash of civilisations (see Huntington 1996) and take part in various attempts in overcoming their situational, valuational and historical contingencies and arrive at spaces of mutually created co-beings. In this cross-civilisational dialogue on development we should not be confined only to the horizontal dimension of self-other relation, but should be open to the vertical dimension as well. This vertical dimension refers to how a civilisation or culture relates to nature and the divine. For Dallmayr,

On the level of civilisational discourse, horizontal openness means attentiveness to other civilisations, but also to civilisation's corollaries (nature and the divine) which speak or intervene in human discourse, but do so in recessed and 'non-informatic' ways. The question is whether we allow ourselves to be addressed in this fashion' (2001: 16).

The Enlightenment model of development self-confidently cuts itself off from the world of nature, except as an object of domination, and the world of transcendence, except as an idle superstructure or a collective hallucination. A widening of our universe of discourse is urgently called for on both axes. On the first axis, we need to engage ourselves with a much more radical critique of anthropocentrism and go beyond the contemporary rethinking of development as 'anthropocentrism with a human face' (see Nederveen 2001). A cross-cultural experience of nature would be helpful, for example, the experience pointed to by the Indian spiritual traditions where all life is sacred and human beings do not have any right to dominate the non-human world. The emergent developments in technologies such as the rise of cyborgs (virtual people with artificial intelligence) may also force us to rethink our anthropocentric models of development, as 'for the first time in their history, human beings would have to cooperate with a different species' which takes all sentient beings, not only humans, seriously (Hamelink 2000: 36). In so far as the axis of transcendence is concerned, contemporary development discourse is an

unreflective participant in the Enlightenment dichotomy of the human social world and the world of transcendence. Our task is to realise the harm such a dissociation does to the relationship between humans here on earth itself. As Jean-Luc Nancy tells us 'It is precisely the immanence of man to man, or it is man, taken absolutely, considered as the immanent being par excellence, that constitutes the stumbling block to a thinking of community' (quoted in Dallmayr 1998: 281).

Critical reflections on development do not call for a fundamental transformation in our modes of being and modes of relationship along these two axes—the natural world and the transcendental. The critics as well as the defenders of Enlightenment leave this opposition unproblematic. Michel Foucault's reconstitution of Enlightenment along 'people's knowledge' is also a part of the same Enlightenment privileging of the human social world. The proposal of a third Enlightenment or practical enlightenment offered by enthusiastic Anglo-American philosophers such as Hilary Putnam (2001) and Richard Rorty (1999) also seems to be very much a family quarrel rather than a radical, global interrogation of the presuppositions of Enlightenment. Hilary Putnam's proposal of practical enlightenment and Stephen Toulmin's (2001) call for return to reason via reasonable human practice do not explore the spiritual ontology of human practice. Surely, we have a lot to learn from the democratic and educational experiments of John Dewey. However, in this age of global conversations, while talking about Enlightenment, can we beat the drums of Dewey uncritically without relating the democratic enlightenment of Dewey to the spiritual enlightenment of experimenters like Gautama Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi? Thus, as we make development a part of global conversation, we would have to proceed cautiously vis-à-vis the contemporary American proposal about third Enlightenment, as there is a one-sided globalisation of Dewey here which is not delinked from the globalisation of Coca Cola.

The dualism between universalism and particularism is another legacy of Enlightenment that determines our modes of development and embodiment of responsibility. To rethink development as an embodiment of global responsibility, we have to transcend the boundaries between the two. The critique of universalism as offered by Foucault and others is not enough, what is called for is an understanding of and participation in the work of what Immanuel Wallerstein *et al* (1996) call 'particularistic universalism'—a proposal that has close affinity with 'situated universalism' recently submitted by Sheldon Pollock *et al* (2000). This, in turn, calls for a multi-valued logic in place of the either-or-logic of particular-

ism and universalism and an ethics of non-injury and non-violence. Philosopher J N Mohanty brings a cross-culturally sensitive philosophical reflection to bear on this pathway of multi-valued logic

The ethic of non-injury applied to philosophical thinking requires that one does not reject outright the other point of view without first recognising the element of truth in it, it is based on the belief that every point of view is partly true, partly false, and partly undecidable. A simple two-valued logic requiring that a proposition must either be true or false is thereby rejected, and what the Jaina philosopher proposes is a multi-valued logic. To this multi-valued logic, I add the Husserlian idea of overlapping contents. The different perspectives on a thing are not mutually exclusive, but share some contents with each other. The different 'worlds' have shared contents, contrary to the total relativism. *If you represent them by circles, they are intersecting circles, not incommensurable, [and it is this model of ] intersecting circles which can get us out of relativism on the one hand and absolutism on the other* (emphases added) (2000: 24)

### **Beyond the Violence of Corporate Globalisation: The Challenge of Global Justice**

If, from a philosophical perspective, Mohanty presents a picture of intersecting circles to transcend the opposition between universalism and particularism, from that of emancipatory political practice, David Harvey presents a picture of multiple theatres. Harvey writes

The metaphor to which I appeal is one of several different 'theatres' of thought and action on some long frontier of 'insurgent' political practices. Advances in one theatre get ultimately stymied or even rolled back unless supported by advances elsewhere. No one theatre is particularly privileged [ ]' (2000a: 234)

Harvey's meditations can help us have a turning point in this reflective journey, and encourage us to combine the widening of the universe of discourse of development with concrete socio-political and spiritual struggles. As we undertake this task of combination, development as humanisation meets with a challenge, often violent, in turning the world into a global marketplace. True, markets have their own place in enabling 'continued socio-economic development, but the contemporary marketisation of the globe has no sense of a limit and is a narrowing of our conceptions of self and the world, and it shrinks our sense of responsibility, too (Sachs 1999). In this context, it is helpful to keep in

mind what Jean and John Comaroff write about our contemporary predicament 'Life under millennial capitalism is neither a game nor a repertoire of rational choices. Already there are signs of altered configurations, of fresh efforts to challenge the triumphal reign of the market' (2000 334-35)

There are anti-systemic and alternative movements everywhere on the rise now. While the advocates of corporate globalisation, including their media spokespersons, dismiss these anti-globalisation movements, they are, in fact, striving for an alternative globalisation, for globalisation as humanisation. For these movements, marketisation of the globe is not an inevitable destiny and they strive to shape the unfolding contours of globalisation in favour of primacy of the human rather than market or corporations. Thus, a slogan I heard in the demonstrations against the European Union (EU) Summit meeting in Gothenburg in June 2001 was 'People, not Profit. Our World is not for Sale'. On the final day of this gathering, 25,000 people marched peacefully in the streets of Gothenburg chanting 'International Solidarity, International Solidarity'. The battle of Gothenburg was continued just a month later in Genoa, where 150,000 people took part.

In both Gothenburg and Genoa there was violence, though overwhelming majority of the protesters were non-violent and did not believe in violence as a mode of contestation. In reflecting on this violence, the mainstream global media, such as CNN, held the protesters responsible. This is, no doubt, biased reporting. I had taken part in the Gothenburg Summit, and I have seen how the police, riding on galloping horses and with dogs, first jumped on the marching crowd. In the ensuing confrontation, while the police had the most sophisticated weapons, the protesters did not have even stones to throw at. As the confrontation intensified, however, the protesters with black masks started digging stones from the ground and started pelting them at the police. So, what we witness here is a fight between the defenders of the system, who have the most advanced technologies at their command, and the protesters (here I am referring to only those protesters who do not feel shy to use violence) have only stones and chairs. Despite this, the police in Gothenburg shot at the volunteers of the Reclaiming the Street group, who were having their anti-corporate street rally in the night, critically wounding three people including a journalist. On the second day of the Summit, in the garden near the canal, where protesters had set up their tents, I met a young man who showed me his bleeding hand—blood oozing out of the bites of the police dog. Despite

this, he and his friends were chanting the slogan 'Love, Love' and flying balloons, not stones, towards the police

However, the violence during the G8 Summit in Genoa was more intense and there the police killed one demonstrator Carlo Giuliani, whose place of assassination in Genoa I visited in November 2002, is the first martyr from Europe in the struggle against corporate globalisation. While his martyrdom has recently inspired demonstrations in many parts of Europe, especially among the young, he remains unnamed to most of us. In this contestation, the defenders of the system are engaged in a one-sided condemnation of violent protesters<sup>3</sup> and even use the name of Mahatma Gandhi for this. Gandhi was not a purist proponent of non-violence, especially non-violence of a cowardly kind, and though he himself would give his life in truthful non-violent (*satyagrahic*) fight against the oppressive forces of the system, he would never pass an a priori moralising judgement on those who use violence to protest against the inhumanity of a system, a system that has shut its doors and windows of perception. A Gandhian engagement with dramas of contestation at both Gothenburg and Genoa also needs to ask this question: what prevents the assembled world leaders to invite the protesters into a round table conversation and listen to them?

Thus, as we reconstitute development as a global responsibility, there is no way we can dissociate our duties from taking part in this violent confrontation between corporate globalisation and globalisation as humanisation. For students of development studies, it calls for an understanding of the emergent logic of violence, where forces of multinational capital join hands with state power in suppressing the rights of people. Such a development scenario is ethically problematic and morally wrong in the first place, not to mention that it violates the spirit of democratic constitutionalism (see Habermas 1993). To understand this, let us acquaint ourselves, albeit briefly, with another struggle: the anti-mining struggle in Kashipur.

Kashipur in the state of Orissa is one of the most backward tribal areas of India. For the last eight years, the people of Kashipur have been waging a fight against multinational mining companies bent on establishing mines in their area. With the might of the state, these companies have also acquired land from many people in the affected villages. Neither the multinational companies nor the state government has ever discussed with the local people what the former want to do in their area and what is going to be their fate after being evicted from their homelands. Agrabamee, a local voluntary organisation, which has not been afraid to support a

dialogue between these contending parties has been subjected to attacks and the state government even banned it for two years. Local people themselves have been subjected to many violent attacks. When all this did not deter the spirit of the local people, a platoon of police descended on the village of Maikanch on 16 December 2000, where people had just completed their communal lunch, and started firing at them, killing three people.

The multinational Hydro company of Norway is one of the parties in this contestation, and Norwatch—an Oslo-based voluntary organisation—has brought the Kashipur struggle to the public sphere in Norway. Tarjei, a Norwatch activist, who has provided support to this struggle, says

I am struck by the fact that our own organisation Norwatch is such a small group, we are only two people, but we are able to create a public opinion here against the mining activities of Hydro. I feel that as the system is becoming increasingly more and more powerful, it is also becoming more and more vulnerable where a single individual can challenge and transform it in concrete ways.

Attac is one of the fast growing transnational social movements that is struggling for the embodiment of global responsibility in concrete ways. Starting in France, it has spread quickly into many parts of Europe and the rest of the world. In countries like Sweden and Finland it has taken the character of a multi-dimensional grass roots mobilisation involving non-violent public protest and critical study of the contemporary dynamics of globalisation. It conducts study circles on the logic of corporate globalisation and the democratic alternatives in economy and society. Young and old, cutting across ideological and party lines, are now joining the space of global solidarity that a movement such as Attac creates. I had a discussion with Bjorn and Gunnar, two young volunteers of Attac, in Stockholm in June 2001, and they told me that members from the Social Democratic Party of Sweden are leaving their old party fold to join Attac, as they find in it a democratic space for self-expression that is not available in their old party. Attac provides them a space to think about issues of global justice in a more concrete and personal way. One of its demands is that multinational companies should pay a tax to the local community where they are working, what is now called the 'Tobin Tax'. Its volunteers are responding to the calling of global responsibility in multiple modes of contestation and creativity, reflection and action. They were at the forefront of the peaceful demonstration on the final day of the EU Summit in Gothenburg in June 2001. Talking to the animating volunteers of Attac one realises that the global community is 'not simply an



empirical reality or presence, but matter of an advent, a calling' (Dallmayr 1998 282)

In this global fight over life and death, the issue of concrete human suffering is elusive, and it requires a sensitive development anthropology to record this beyond the representation of movements themselves. As Upendra Baxi notes, 'The "analytic" standpoint fails to see the logic of social movements from the perspective of those violated?' (2000 39). He does not, however, recognise that leaders of social movements themselves can fail to identify themselves with the suffering faces and bodies of men and women whose lives they represent. Here it is helpful to go back to the story of the anti-mining struggle in Kashipur. Abhilash Jhodia, one of the three people killed in the police firing in Maikanch, hailed from that village itself. He was a young man of twenty-five when he was shot dead, leaving behind his pregnant wife, two children and ageing parents. During my visit to Maikanch I felt that the leaders of the anti-mining struggle in the village are in a way happy that the firing took place, because police firing and the unintentional martyrdom of these three people has provided new momentum to the struggle and contributed to people's loss of fear. But, the experience of Subarna, Abhilash's wife, and his children is different. When I went their house along with some young people of the village, Subarna was not at home. She had gone to a distant forest, even at the advanced stage of her pregnancy, to collect firewood which she would sell for her livelihood. Abhilash's father, who was holding his young son, told us 'In the night it is difficult. The young boy is asking when would his father come home?' When I was finally able to meet with Subarna, she was silent as a statue. Words and tears have run their course in her life, and her vacant eyes embody a different experience of the struggle compared with the leaders in the village, for whom Abhilash has quickly become a dead somebody whose martyrdom has energised their movement. There is an erasure of concrete faces in such a movemental representation as well, here the calling of responsibility calls for a vigilant awareness that refuses to be trapped even in the logic of anti-systemic movements and, in a spirit of continued seeking of solidarity, brings the untold suffering of women such as Subarna to our consciousness.

Thus, there are many ethical sides to globalisation and global responsibility than meets the eye. Alongside globalisation, cosmopolitanism is another regnant discourse today with which it is helpful to have a brief encounter as a prelude to our following reconstitution of development as an undertaking in suffering and hope. Here again, we witness two contending forces: cosmopolitanism as an elitist globalism that wants to

be cosmopolitan in its lifestyle (not in life-politics), and cosmopolitanism that represents the force of global democratisation—a fight for cosmopolitan democracy from within local societies and nation-states. About the first kind of cosmopolitanism, Pollock *et al* write

The discriminatory perspectives of an older form of globalisation—colonisation—seem to have revived themselves at the point at which we readily consider ourselves to be worldwide citizens forever ‘hooked up’ (connected) on-line. All the derring-do between the local and the global in the dialectic of worldly thinking should not conceal the fact that neo-liberal cosmopolitan thought is founded on a conformist sense of what it means to be a ‘person’ as an abstract unit of cultural exchange’ (2000: 581)

About the latter, Ulrich Beck tells us ‘cosmopolitanism means global interrelationships and a transnational vocabulary of symbols, but it also means a deep engagement in local activities, local consciousness, connection to local people. It means having wings and roots at the same time’ (2001: 2). Beck goes on to argue ‘globalism is a basic enemy of democracy and therefore be supplemented by the cosmopolitan principle of recognising the otherness of the other’ (*Ibid*).

Responding to the calling of global responsibility at the contemporary juncture requires development to participate in this contested field of cosmopolitanism, the struggle between cosmopolitanism as a global elitism and cosmopolitanism as a yearning for cosmopolitan democracy, which parallels the struggle between globalisation from above and globalisation from below (Appadurai 2000, Das 2001a). As Harvey argues, ‘A meaningful cosmopolitanism does not entail some passive contemplation of global citizenship. It is, as Kant himself insisted, a principle of intervention to make the world (and its geography) something other than what it is’ (2000b: 560).

### **New Dimensions of Realisation of Justice: Self-Cultivation, Hope and Suffering**

Harvey is not alone in invoking the memory of Kant in radical ways for helping us come to terms with the contemporary challenge of global responsibility. Notable here is the passionate reflections of anthropologist Keith Hart who writes

Kant saw that the world was moving towards war between coalition of nation-states, yet he posed the question of how humanity might construct a 'perpetual peace' beyond the boundaries of state, based on principles we all share. Kant held that the last and most difficult task facing humanity was the administration of justice world-wide (2000: 3).

As we have seen with the case of movements such as Attac, the Kantian question of a global justice is now at the heart of many movements for a humane globalisation and has gone beyond the speculative world of Kantian philosophers of justice of our times such as John Rawls (1999, 2001). For Hart, 'In order to pursue this goal, the world has to be imaginatively reduced in scale and our subjectivity expanded so that a meaningful link can be established between the two' (*Ibid*).

In this praxis of establishing meaningful linkage, Hart says 'We need to feel more at home in the world, to find the means of actively resisting alienation' (*Ibid*). The task of resisting alienation can be enriched by creatively embodying the spirit of both Karl Marx and Martin Heidegger. Marx spoke about the need to overcome social alienation, and Heidegger, the alienation of our authentic self. There is now a need to combine these two aspirations for overcoming alienation (see Harvey 1996). Heidegger also challenges us to understand the fragile character of our being in the world and urges us not to cling to our secured homes and undertake a journey of homelessness, a travel in the world. We, of course, have to come home, but the home we come back to is not a secured abode—'the "home" sought and found in homecoming is not a place located somewhere else in empirical space-time, but rather something like a promise—a promise which also does not point simply to a no-place or a place outside of space-time, but rather inhabits the journey from beginning to end' (Dallmayr 2000a: 8). To resist alienation in the world, we need to understand and take part in this dialectic between homelessness and homecoming.

This need for a simultaneous effort in overcoming self-alienation and social alienation calls for an interlinked engagement in self-cultivation and democratic participation. Sadly, in critical theorists of public sphere and human development such as Habermas and Sen we miss any acknowledgement of the need for appropriate self-cultivation. In their recent work, *India: Development and participation*, Jean Dreze and Sen (2002) tell us about both the instrumental and intrinsic significance of participation for 'value formation' and for democracy and development. Their agenda of democratic participation is definitely of great significance for all of us concerned, especially in India that is still feudal in its tempera-

ment and social arrangement in many ways and where even spiritual movements have hard time in overcoming their feudal past. However, in Dreze and Sen there is no recognition of the need to supplement public participation with appropriate self-engagement and self-participation radically, including nurturing appropriate self-cultivation for value formation. Radically supplementing democratic public participation with self-cultivation is now an epochal challenge. Ramshroy Roy presents this need for simultaneous engagement evocatively

[Public order is threatened by the split between] man's concern for his own good and that for the good of others. But can this threat to the public order be mitigated, if not completely eliminated, by the installation of the Polis? For Aristotle, transcendence of self-interest is consequent upon participation in public affairs [but] the shortcomings associated with personal character cannot be expected to be rectified by the public realm, if it lacks necessary support from individuals reborn as citizens. To be reborn as a person who, rising above his self-interest, becomes attentive to and actively seeks to pursue collective good, is, then, to willingly accept a life dedicated to the cultivation of *dharma* (1999: 5).

Taking part in the dialectic of homelessness and homecoming, self-cultivation and public engagement, is not a smooth affair, it calls for us to be able to undertake suffering for the sake of our journey. Kant and Kantians such as Hart and Habermas forget this issue of suffering. Here it is helpful to realise that, for the sake of embodying a life of justice as 'subjects in history', we have to prepare ourselves to undertake suffering, in fact, embody the pains of groaning humanity. For this we have to go beyond Kant, as in the Kantian world we find little preparation for undertaking suffering for the sake of justice, an inadequacy that continues to haunt us despite the glorious chanting of Kant's name. For this we may need to befriend Gandhi who presents us a passionate call for undertaking suffering for the sake of establishing peace and justice. Gandhi urges us to understand the link between morality and martyrdom, as he, following a long line of martyrs—Antigone, Socrates, Jesus Christ—lays down his life for the sake of peace and justice (Uberoi 1996, Giri 2002). Without mentioning the name of Gandhi, Edward Said (2000) also provides us a similar path of engagement. For Said, the conflict between entrenched rivals, such as Palestinians and Israelis, cannot be resolved unless both the parties understand the suffering of each other rather than inflict suffering on the other.

Thus, shared suffering is a key challenge now, the challenge for a morally sensitive development anthropology is not only to describe the suffering of those who are violated by the logic of corporate globalisation, but also share this suffering in an embodied mode. Such an embodiment of justice has its own mode of justification as well. Neo-Kantians like Habermas, who are now celebrated heroes of a politics of inclusion of the other, tell us that we must justify our beliefs to others through a process of rational argumentation. But rational argumentation has its limit in convincing the other about the soundness and significance of our moral beliefs and convictions. Suffering—in fact, suffering undertaken for the sake of love—has the power to unlock the minds and hearts of others.

The need for such a mode of engagement that feels identified with the suffering of others and approaches one's own not from a position of valorised strength, but from acknowledgement of human vulnerability, has become urgent after the violent turbulence of 'September 11'. On 11 September 2001, the Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre at New York city were destroyed and thousands killed by the terrorists. What has to be our response to this? As Veena Das tells us 'Might we be able to mourn with the survivors of September 11 without needing to appropriate their grief for other grander projects' (2001: 111). The grand project in the global order now is the war on terrorism, but those who are leading this war do not want to acknowledge that their war on terrorism is itself a campaign in terror and posing a great threat to human security and global peace.

There is a need for a different response to the problem of terrorism. It is important to realise that this problem cannot be solved through war, especially when those who are fighting this war on terrorism are themselves terrorists in killing innocent children, women and men whenever they feel like doing it. They are enabled in their terrorism in the now triumphant ideology of 'just war' (Hardt and Negri 2000: 12). War has now become a part of the ideology of an imperial formation, and 'Just war is no longer in any sense an activity of defence or resistance. It has become rather an activity justified in itself' (*Ibid.*: 13). This new imperial mode of justification is beginning to create new modes of justification for development: we must have development so that we would eliminate social situations of poverty and underdevelopment which breed terrorism. But, development as global responsibility has to go beyond such instrumental and violent justifications. A humanistic development anthropology has to go beyond such instrumental and violent justification for development. A humanistic development anthropology concerned with the pathos of

human suffering has a greater role to play in creating self-awareness that the key challenge is not terrorism but the establishment of peace. It can help us remember what Desiderius Erasmus had urged us to realise in his epochal work, *Complaints of peace* (1516), more than five hundred years ago

Peace speaks If it were to their advantage for men to shun, spurn and reject me, although I have done nothing to deserve it, I would only lament the wrong done to me and their injustice, but since in rejecting me they deny themselves the source of all human happiness and bring on themselves a sea of disasters of every kind, I must shed tears rather for the misery they suffer than for any wrong they do me. I should have liked simply to be angry with them, but I am driven to feel pity and sorrow for their plight (1986: 293)

By putting forward visions of peace, justice and shared suffering, development can contribute to reconstitution of hope in a new way, as the global community is now at a turning point parallel to the catastrophic decades of 1940s when development had emerged as a new hope. Both socio-spiritual mobilisations in providing a new aspiration of human development and socio-political struggles for global justice and peace and the attendant preparation in undertaking suffering can provide a substantive content to development as hope in the present context. Now we talk about development as hope only archaeologically, characterising the history of development in its formative years. We have to renew development as multiple practices of hope by undertaking multi-dimensional political and spiritual struggles, all of which call for some amount of undertaking of suffering from all of us concerned. There is an intimate connection between suffering and hope and this is mediated through our concrete activities and relationships in the world. At the contemporary juncture there is a decline of hope, especially as it relates to improving the quality of relationships in the world and in our readiness to undertake suffering for realisation of social hope. Hope persists, if at all, mainly in our individualistic domains confined to issues of a rising income and one's own security. Many of us cannot even hope that 'someday we shall ever have a classless global society, one in which there are now vast differences open to children in one nation and another, or between those open to children in one section of a city and those in another section of the same city' (Rorty 1999: 230).

In this context, to be able to hope requires courage—courage not only of the intellect and will, but also of the whole being. We have to learn to

hope in a new way different from the past modes of certainty. We would have to learn to hope in the concrete spaces of our socio-political and spiritual struggles, but at the same time proceed with an acknowledgement of the contingency and a sense of human finitude and fragility. Yet, in coming to terms with the calling of global responsibility neither contingency nor human finitude should be an excuse for not undertaking concrete activities that contribute to self-development, reduction of human suffering and transformation of the world. As Chittaranjan Das urges us 'One liberates oneself by collaborating with a liberating process and that is perhaps how we collaborate in the march of this world of ours' (2001b: 179).

## Notes

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- 1 Like Strydom, we owe the idea of co-responsibility to philosopher Karl-Otto Apel. Apel (1993, 2001) argues that, to come to terms with ethical and moral challenges of our times, neither individual-centred micro-ethics nor society-centred macro-ethics is enough. What is required is a planetary ethics of co-responsibility where all of us consider ourselves responsible to each other as members of a planetary community. Apel clarifies that this does not mean that all of us share the responsibility in the same manner. In a recent discussion with the author, he noted that 'even if I was not the one who had ordered the war in Kosovo, still I am not totally absolved of my responsibility'.
- 2 Dallmayr is sensitive to the elitist bias in the historical manifestation of *Bildung* in Germany. For him, reviving the spirit of *Bildung* now is not to perpetuate elite culture or class privilege, but to embrace popular culture with openness to learning.
- 3 This was the position of Mr Jim Clancy, the CNN anchorman hosting the discussion on the damage caused by violent protest in Genoa. 'Who is going to pay for the loss of property?'

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# Women in Two Work Roles and the Quality of Their Life

**Mala Bhandari**

*This paper deals with home and work as two overlapping spheres of life. It investigates how the Quality of Life of women is affected by their dual roles, one at home and the other in office. It studies their home and office lives with the Quality of Life approach. It analyses the socio-economic dynamics of their households and discusses the determinants of their Quality of Life.*

The presence of women in paid employment outside the home is not a new phenomenon. The changes which occurred in the market economy due to the Industrial Revolution led to an increase in the number of women seeking opportunities in the paid labour force. In addition, urbanisation led to rising costs of living, thus providing a strong motivation for increased participation of women in the labour force, mainly to augment family income (Dak 1988: 7). Thus, women's employment became crucially important in the economic support of families with insufficient incomes and substandard living conditions (Miralao 1983: 21).

Dual-earner households have become a salient feature of contemporary life. As can be expected, this has directly impacted upon women and their families. A great deal of research has been conducted in the area of women and employment, examining the different aspects of women's home and office lives. Most of these studies deal with women's domestic work and occupational work as two independent roles, and suggest that this results in role conflict (see Myrdal and Klen 1956, Sethi 1978, Mies 1980, Upreti 1988, Mathur 1992). The present study adopts a different approach towards this area of research. It examines the two roles in terms of their independent as well as joint contributions to the Quality of Life of working women. It focuses on women's lives at home and in the office to understand the possible linkages, compatibilities and conflicts between these two spheres. This kind of approach is necessary in view of the prevailing emphasis on conflicting roles and role strain for women as revealed by other studies.

This paper discusses the lives of working women in the domestic domain and at the workplace and studies how their Quality of Life is affected under the impact of the two roles, that is, as housewives and office workers. The observations made here are based on primary data collected by the author from women clerks employed in Central Government departments in Delhi City.

### **Quality of Life: Concept and Indicators**

The term 'Quality of Life' is often discussed in broad terms as satisfaction of needs, feelings of well-being, good or bad working conditions, and other indicators. Such a conceptualisation of Quality of Life encompasses all the material aspects of human life, and may extend beyond it to cover the physical and psychological dimensions. An UNESCO (1977: 31) Report defines Quality of Life as an inclusive concept that covers all the aspects of living, ranging from material satisfaction of vital needs and location in a healthy ecosystem to the more transcendental aspects of life such as personal development and self-realisation. It identifies 'happy with life', 'hope of life' and 'health and life expectations satisfied' as the key indicators of Quality of Life.

K F Schuessler and G A Fisher (1985: 132) distinguish between 'objective' and 'subjective' indicators of Quality of Life. Most of the indicators identified by them are presumed causes of Quality of Life, and some are based on responses to survey items measuring feelings of satisfaction, happiness or related attitudes. Szalai (1980: 16) refers to new and special kinds of social indicators that are based both on objectively observable facts and living conditions, on the one hand, and on people's own subjective perceptions and assessment of the life they live under given circumstances, on the other. In a study of the Irulas, a tribal community inhabiting the Nilgiri District of Tamil Nadu, Parthasarthy (1988: 245) concludes that the Irulas are satisfied with the fulfilment of their objective needs such as nutrition, drinking water, perpetuation of the species, and shelter and warmth, but they are not happy with the interference by outsiders in their aesthetic, social and cultural dimensions, an interference which they feel casts their community in a bad light. The various economic theories and development strategies have identified four different types of indicators of Quality of Life: (1) per-capita income, (2) growth of per-capita income, (3) basic needs satisfaction,<sup>1</sup> and (4) living conditions.

Attempts have been made to quantify, measure and compare Quality of Life of individuals and groups. The Physical Quality of Life Index

constructed by Morris D Morris and Associates for the United States Overseas Development Council in 1979 (see Kakwani 1987: 11) consisted of three indicators: (1) infant mortality, (2) life expectancy at age one, and (3) adult literacy rate. In 1978, L. Scheer (1980) compared the Quality of Life for fifteen Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development countries, emphasising health and mortality rates. The indicators used were per capita Gross National Product at constant prices, life expectancy of children, women and men, expenditure on food as percentage of total spending, excess consumption calories, and average number of persons per room.

Igor V. Lada Bestuzhev (1980: 162) rejected the quantitative measurements of Quality of Life, and called for the issues to be tackled in Quality of Life as self-preservation, self-development, self-expression, self-realisation, and self-respect and respect from others. He gave an inclusive list of Quality of Life indicators by including questions related to the working and rest conditions of people at office and home: the quality of housing, clothing, food, the conditions under which people take their meals, etc.

For a working individual, Quality of Life cannot be separated from the quality of work he or she performs. Accordingly, Nitish R. De (1984: M47) views the quality of occupational work as a basic and decisive indicator of Quality of Life. Determining Quality of Life based on the quality of work means the replacement of a consumer's perspective by that of human being as a productive or, even more, as a creative being. The higher the share of creative activity in the working process, the higher the quality of work, and consequently higher the Quality of Life. The present study, therefore, analyses the domestic and work lives of women both independently and as dependent on each other.

### **The Delhi Study**

A preliminary survey of women clerks in Delhi City showed that they faced many problems in their daily lives, including transportation for commuting to work, long working hours, lack of household electric gadgets, absence of paid help for domestic tasks, and worry about children left at home during the respondent's absence. A stratified random sample of 100 married women clerks working in the Central Government departments in Delhi was chosen for the study. These women clerks were in the age group of 30-40 years and they came from either nuclear or extended households. To rule out cultural bias, the criterion of cultural homogeneity was

adopted in drawing the sample. Thus, the women clerks in the sample hail from the northern states of India of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Most of them had migrated to Delhi with their parents two or three decades ago.

The data were collected by the interview method using an interview guide. The following five indicators were used for analysing the Quality of Life of the women clerks:

- 1 *Economic autonomy and empowerment*, in terms of intra-household decision-making in financial matters, especially the management of salaries
- 2 *Adequacy of nutrition and food intake*
- 3 *Physical components of well-being*, in terms of access to and utilisation of medical services
- 4 *Social and mental health components of well-being*, in terms of the respondent's social interactions with kith and kin and their pursuit of leisure opportunities
- 5 *Other components of well-being*, including the extent of drudgery involved in the respondent's domestic and office work routines

These indicators illuminate the key *objective conditions* of the respondents' lives and their *subjective perceptions and interpretations* of their experiences. While the objective indicators unveil the economic, physical and social aspects of women's work lives, the subjective indicators reveal how the women perceived the impact of their domestic and occupational roles on their Quality of Life.

### **Economic Autonomy and Decision Making**

This indicator of Quality of Life looks into intra-household economies and examines the context of control over household income. Do women control their earnings? What is the pattern of decision making in some of the economic areas such as expenditures on food, entertainment and travel, and the household savings?

Data show that 64 percent of the respondents had to part with their entire salary. They received not more than 15 percent of their carry home salary for their personal expenses which, by and large, included expenses for commuting, using the office canteen and purchase of small items for children. In most cases, women were given a specific amount of money to manage the kitchen expenses, the control over the remaining amount and other household incomes rested with their husbands.

Even the few respondents who retained their entire salaries had to spend it on the household with the knowledge of their spouses. In 15 percent of the cases, the respondent and her spouse pooled their salaries to form a common fund for the household. This fund was also spent at the discretion of the husband. Regarding decision making in some areas of expenditure, such as food, entertainment and travel, and on household savings, data show that in 5 percent of the cases, the husband and his parents had a decisive say with very little participation of the respondents. The latter, by and large, managed and controlled the amount they received as their 'pocket money'. The data on banking activity also show that the husbands played a significant role in the management of bank accounts maintained in the name of respondents. However, the husbands' parents were found to have a limited role, if any, in the management of these bank accounts.

The study does not support the commonly held view that women holding a job control the incomes earned by them and that it enhances their participation in the financial decision making in the household. The data show that working women do not always get the feeling of freedom of access and control over money, even the money which they earn. This was so because in most cases the women had to give their salaries to their spouse, in nuclear families, or to his mother, in the extended households. It is true that the women's salaries played an important part in raising the income of the household, but their personal use of the enhanced resources did not increase commensurately. This is influenced by the cultural and familial perceptions of the importance of the woman's/wife's salary. Culturally, in north India, the husband is still considered the primary earner for the family. The same was found true of the households in the study.

### **Food Intake and Nutritional Levels**

This indicator concerns the questions: Did holding a job and earning a salary contribute to women's food intakes in quantitative and qualitative terms? Did it affect their food consumption patterns? The data show that the food-consumption pattern in the respondents' households reflected the traditional pattern, which has the following characteristics. Women cook and serve food to other members of the household, they eat last and, very often, have to manage with the leftover food, and they forgo their share and fondness for particular food items in deference to the tastes and preferences of others in the family. Fifty-five percent of the respondents

served food to others and they ate last. They served food to family members according to their status and importance in the household. However, the office job has enabled many women to have easy access to sources of food outside home, such as eating joints, which are close to their offices. They frequented such places with their colleagues/friends to eat items of their choice. They managed this expense out of their monthly pocket money. This, along with whatever snacks they might bring to the office from home, supplemented their daily food intake.

A nutritional analysis of the respondents' food intake on working days and on holidays was done to assess its adequacy in terms of calories and proteins. It was found that protein and calorie intakes of the respondents were not very significantly different from the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) as formulated by the Indian Council of Medical Research. This shows that staying outside home for long hours, for example, at the place of employment, has not resulted in nutritional inadequacy among the respondents. On the contrary, control over some money enables them to eat the items of their choice while in and around the office, an opportunity not afforded by their counterparts who stay at home.

### **Aspects of Well-being**

This indicator probes the question of how holding a job can influence a woman's physical, mental and social well-being. The illness behaviour of the respondents was found, by and large, to be conditioned by their household responsibilities. The respondents provided care during illness to all the other members of the household, but in their own case medical attention was deferred till the symptoms became more severe. The study shows that it is the respondents' commitment to household work as well as other members' dependence on them that, coupled with the desire that the routine goes on smoothly as long as the respondents can carry out their household tasks, that delays their consultation with a doctor. Nine percent of the respondents reportedly availed themselves of institutionalised medical care for minor ailments. The remaining respondents took recourse to self-medication at home. They followed the same practice for other members of the household. There was no instance of a serious illness among the respondents.

The respondents' physical well-being vis-à-vis their living conditions, including accommodation, water supply and sanitation and other facilities, was not optimum. Most of them lived in small houses, which were either rented or shared with other family members such as the husbands'.

parents, married and unmarried brothers and sisters, etc. Those living in government provided accommodation felt themselves fortunate to live in small flats, normally comprising of two small rooms, bathroom, toilet, kitchen and a small covered balcony. However, in most cases, there was a marked disproportion between the number of family members and the total space available to them for various tasks and activities. As a result, the respondents performed such tasks as cooking, washing and child rearing within a limited space, which was also being used simultaneously for other activities by other members of the household. This resulted in a lack of freedom and privacy for the respondents.

The physical environment in respondents' offices with regard to such aspects as cleanliness or seating layout, ranged from being 'satisfactory' to 'bad'. The exterior of the offices was better maintained than the interior. The corridors were in a pathetic condition with *paan*-stained corners and staircases. Many respondents were seated in small, overcrowded and ill-maintained rooms with very little space to move around. These conditions were not conducive for work efficiency among the respondents.

Holding a job is found to have a positive effect on other aspects of well-being of the respondents. For instance, it raised their age-at-marriage. They saw getting a permanent central government job as a prerequisite for marriage. Most of them had got jobs by 17 or 18 years of age, and only after getting a permanent central government job did they get married, usually between 22 and 26 years of age. According to them, remaining outside the home due to their job had created problems in rearing small children. This, and their awareness of the small-family norm, had resulted in 80 percent of the respondents having not more than two children.

The data on the recreational and social life of the respondents' showed that the social aspects of their well-being were taken care of more in the office than at home. According to the respondents, employment provided them an opportunity to develop their own identity, independent of their families. Office was a place away from home where they found solace in the company of their colleagues and experienced freedom from the pressures of their family members, especially the mother-in-law. They considered it a place where they could shed the tensions of their family life and where they could think of themselves as 'important' individuals in their own right. The common refrain among all the respondents was that they could not think about themselves at home, where they were busy rushing from one task to another and looking after the needs of their other family members. In contrast, at the office, they could think of attending to their own needs. They made long-lasting friendships with their colleagues.



They shared meals and enjoyed extended tea sessions with them. They discussed their domestic problems with each other and found solutions to them. They even went for occasional outings such as movies and shopping with their friends from the office.

Clerical work in the office was looked upon by most of them as light and easily manageable. Though they found office tasks monotonous and boring, the accessibility to free-time and company of colleagues were quite compensating. As they said, a lot of free-time was available to them in contrast to the time constraints at home. The respondents had adopted the 'easy going' and 'relaxed' work culture characteristic of government offices all over the country. Relaxation or leisure in the office manifested in two forms: one, the 'free time' which was built into their work performance. They were never seen to be in a hurry to accomplish work in the office. One could see them gossiping with colleagues while attending to their work at their desks. The other form of relaxation was evident in having 'free time' because of a light workload and fewer duties to perform. This was exhibited through their extended tea sessions and lunch breaks during which they could be observed resting in the office itself or in make-shift break-rooms. They attended to their routine office work before lunch-time and spent their remaining time for themselves. They were seen performing many home-related activities such as knitting sweaters, stitching falls on saris, etc. The office time was used to buy household essentials and personal effects such as cosmetics. Thus, their home life extended to their office in several respects. At home, since the accent was on household chores, the respondents reported that they were not left with much physical energy to pursue their hobbies or indulge in other activities of interest. They spent whatever little free time they had at home either in performing the miscellaneous household chores such as setting the cupboards, or lazing in bed for a while to overcome physical fatigue.

A detailed analysis of the respondents' routines shows the existence of a considerable amount of drudgery in their lives. It was exacerbated due to a lack of infrastructural facilities. The respondents had inadequate labour-saving gadgets to perform household chores and limited resources to acquire such gadgetry. It was accentuated by non-availability of easy and fast means of commuting between home and office. Their status as working women has increased drudgery in their lives. Most of them reported that running between office and home and travelling by irregular and crowded city transport, besides shouldering the responsibility of child care and endless household chores, caused them physical and mental fatigue.

They were solely responsible for managing the household with almost no help from other family members including the spouse. The respondents got more help from outside the home on payment than from other female members within the household. Any help by other family members was extended on a 'reciprocal compensation' basis, that is, the respondents had to work more at home on holidays to compensate for the help they received from other family members on during the week days.

The husband's participation in household tasks was seen to be very marginal. In nuclear households, the spouses did extend 'help' to the respondents during morning hours. However, this help neither made them solely responsible for any particular task nor compelled them to perform it regularly. In extended households, the 'help' of spouses in every aspect of intra-household chores was noticeably absent. The traditional gender-based division of labour in the household, that is, women being responsible for household tasks, was very much evident in the respondents' households. While the spouses were rarely responsible for tasks on a routine basis, the respondents had to manage their tasks without any laxity. The women felt the brunt of dual roles due to lack of husbands' or others' cooperation at home. They avoided situations of tension in the household by not discussing this matter with them. They tried their best not to let their office work adversely affect their domestic roles, at least visibly so. The fact that women, like men, held full time office jobs, in no way helped to change the traditional pattern of sharing the intra-household tasks among the male and female members and among those going out to work and those staying back.

### **Conclusion**

One thing that has emerged from the present study is that the women bear the brunt of the duality of their roles - at home and in the office. A job is an additional task for them to carry out along with their household responsibilities. There is no respite for them from the boredom and drudgery in routine household tasks. The work at home is repetitive, inescapable and tiring for them. Within this scenario, the silver lining in their lives is provided by their work-life outside the home. It enlivens their routines by providing them leisure opportunities during the working hours in the office.

To sum up, employment outside the household has improved the social aspects, more than the physical aspects, of well-being for the working women. The office enriches their social life by providing them a

reliable base for interaction with colleagues with whom they may share their pleasures and sorrows. The women look at the office as a place away from the monotony of household drudgery. This study supports the view that the employment of women enhances the resources of the household, which adds to the Quality of Life of other family members in terms of access to and availability of more resources and facilities.

To what extent the women themselves have benefited from this increase in resources remains an important question. The study shows that there is an insignificant impact on the social and economic position of these women within the family, particularly in decision-making about money matters. Similarly, the conventional ways of intra-household distribution of food and division of labour show no changes. The physical drudgery has, in fact, increased in their lives due to lack of help from other household members, unavailability of paid help and a lack of improved facilities and technology for carrying out the tasks at home. However, these women have devised ways to harmonise their two roles, the one at home and the other in the office. They have restricted their job-related aspirations and made home the focus of their lives. The study supports the fact that Quality of Life of working women depends more on the socio-cultural environment and perceptions related to their jobs and earnings than the mere fact that they are in full-time economically gainful employment outside the home. This study concludes that women's needs arising from their dual domestic and occupational roles require serious attention by the household and the society, if the aim is to improve their Quality of Life.

## **Note**

This paper was read in absentia at the Michigan Women's Association Conference, held at Marygrove College, Michigan, United States of America on 23-24 March 2001. The author is indebted to Professor Aneeta A. Minocha, Department of Sociology, University of Delhi for her valuable comments and suggestions.

1. Quality of Life covers diverse and innumerable human needs. Human needs at the elementary level may include essentials of survival like drinking water, perpetuation needs, shelter and warmth. However, a consideration of basic needs cannot stop at the level of mere survival, it has to transcend survival due to the special attributes and characteristics of human beings and social and psychological urges and demands.

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## Book Reviews

Aidan Cox, Steen Folke, Lau Schulpen and Neil Webster *Do the poor matter enough? A comparative study of European aid for poverty reduction in India* New Delhi Concept Publishing Company, 2002, 320 pp, Rs 400 (hb) ISBN 81-7022-914-6

The book under review is an attempt to answer the general question Do the poor matter enough for the European donors of aid to India? The specific questions asked are Whether the donors influence poverty eradication programmes according to what they think would alleviate poverty? Whether the donors prefer some states to others? Whether the donors are lured by easily achievable targets rather than address issues that have deeper and more definite connections to poverty?

The authors say that aid, on the whole, matters. Although the total aid that comes to the world is less than 1 percent of the GNP of the European Union countries, the aid to India as a percentage of the individual state's spending on poverty alleviation programmes forms quite a substantial portion. Usually, all aid comes to the central government, from where it is disbursed to the states. Under normal circumstances, donors do not have a say in the manner in which the money would be spent. However, since the aid forms a large portion of all spending on poverty alleviation, donors usually state their preferences. They tend to favour Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, because these are politically less problematic states. They tend to be a bit indifferent to West Bengal, Bihar and Rajasthan, because of political corruption and interference in those states.

Often donors have a say in the design and implementation of programmes. Programmes sometimes target the poor more as beneficiaries without building their capacities to participate in the market. Since monitoring and evaluation are important for foreign donors, they only set targets that are easy to track. This leads to designing programmes that only address the symptoms of poverty and not poverty itself. The authors clarify their dissatisfaction by saying that the real causes of poverty lie in livelihoods, ownership and rights. They note that people tend to benefit more from a programme when participation is built into it than in cases where there is no participation. However, even when there is participation in the programmes, it has been at the stage of project implementation and not at the stage of formulation.

Irrigation and watershed projects have benefited the land-owning population. The poor have not done as well as they were targeted, because they lacked knowledge and there were no local-level institutions to ensure their participation. So, when the activities expanded because of irrigation, migrants from the other states came in to participate and partake of the benefits. In case of the forestry programmes, poverty and ecology contradicted each other. Men did better than women, because the forest is looked upon more as a supply source of consumables like honey and lac and not as a source of fuel and fodder, typically a female domain. Lack of marketing outlets belied the benefits that went into collecting the forest products. The health projects did not do well because the money spent on the associated training was small, and, lacking knowledge and access to information, they did not benefit the poor as expected. For rural water supply, sometimes the lack of maintenance of the hardware led to their decline. It was only in primary education that the poor and the women benefited. Similarly, other vocational training programmes, especially for women, worked to a large extent. Urban slum development projects that attempted to create self-employment for the youth failed because the supporting infrastructure was not there.

In all those cases where the projects were supported by local capacity-building of institutions and human beings, they worked to the benefit of the poor. In instances where larger issues of asset ownership and land rights were ignored, projects did not perform as expected. The authors tell us that it is not enough to define poverty as income deficiency, it is important to understand it holistically in terms of its embeddedness in the social and institutional structures that keep some people away from participating fully in their everyday life.

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**Alf Hiltebeitel and Kathleen M. Erndl (eds)** *Is the goddess a feminist? The Politics of South Asian goddesses*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, 287 pp., Rs 595 (hb), ISBN 0-19-566419-1

The two major academic fields to which this collection of essays contributes—the study of female divinities in India and the general feminist critique of religious structures and theologies—have attracted a great deal of attention in both academic and non-academic circles in recent years.

Hence, though this collection deals with two highly elaborated themes, it opens refreshing perspectives and discussions by making the question of the relationship between them central by asking 'Is the goddess a feminist?'

The contributions by Rita Gross and Stanley Kurtz present two contrasting answers to this question. Of all the contributors, Gross most unreservedly attests the feminist character of the Goddess. Although not dispensing entirely with illustrations of the 'psychologically comforting' or 'politically liberating' effects that the Goddess tradition has for Hindu women, her basic argument rests on a decontextualised interpretative device: goddesses are feminists, she argues, if their devotees are, relying on 'cross-cultural inspiration' and simply taking into account what the Goddess means to 'us'. Kurtz, on the other hand, not only categorically denies the question at stake, but he even goes so far as to suspect it of engaging with a 'misplaced alliance'. 'Western' feminism, according to him, rests on the idea of 'egalitarian individualism', which has little to do with the familial social and above all hierarchical contexts in which gender roles are embedded in India, the question, therefore, misses the 'deeper unity of opposites' for which the Goddess stands.

Other contributions qualify these two positions in one way or the other. Tracy Pintchman takes issue with Gross in arguing that because the symbolism of the Goddess is open to many interpretations—from the sexist imagery of the female's destructive potential, through the ideal of *pativrata*, the 'good wife', to feminist visions of non-subservient roles of women—it is critical to determine 'who is doing the interpretation and for what purpose'. She warns, 'appropriating Hindu goddesses' as a 'resource' for the empowerment of women in the West without reflecting on their ambivalent representation in India may eventually be just a spiritual extension of the material exploitation that Asia had suffered from Europe for so long.

Kathleen Erndl indirectly challenges the Dumontian paradigm of the hierarchical, and nothing but hierarchical, structure of Indian society that inspires Kurtz. *Shakti*, the creative 'power', that is primarily related to women, she argues, establishes a 'profoundly non-hierarchical axis of value' which cuts across castes and other social divisions based on the opposition between the pure and the impure.

It is paradigmatic of the frequently mentioned paradox, that the oldest and richest living tradition of female divinity cannot prevent the patriarchal subordination of women in social praxis, that the majority of contributors carefully consider their answers to the question raised in the

title Contrary to the currency which the iconography of Kali has as a symbolisation of women's strength among feminists in the United States of America, especially when the goddess is shown in a men-slaying rage, Usha Menon and Richard A Shweder show that women and men in Orissa interpret pictures of Kali's rage as depicting a moment of female shame Interestingly, however, this interpretation again betrays Western stereotypes, since the Indians whom the authors interviewed saw Kali's shame not as evidence of her weakness, but as a capacity of voluntary self-control that, in general, was taken to 'make women superior to men'

Alf Hiltebeitel and Cynthia Ann Humes come to similar conclusions in their analyses of classical Hindu texts Hiltebeitel examines a well-known episode from the Mahabharata that describes how Yudhishtira bets his wife Draupadi in playing dice against Shakuni and loses her Precisely at this moment, however, when Draupadi's powerlessness seems to have reached its extreme point, she challenges Yudhishtira by asking, 'Whom did you lose first, yourself or me?' Draupadi's question, Hiltebeitel argues, does more than unmask and defy the male claim of 'lordship over and ownership of women' By referring to a deeper level of Samkhya philosophy (discussed in a chapter by Alfred Collins), it illustrates that *purusha*, the sovereign male self, stands in an ambivalent relationship to *prakriti*, the female world or matter that makes it 'highly dangerous to claim to be a self'

Humes's complex interpretation of the Devi Mahatmya also answers the question of whether the Goddess is a feminist ambivalently 'Women are not directly offered in the text an empowered role outside of marriage, family, and subordination', she states Nonetheless, the 'Glorification of the Devi' brings into view an 'immanent power' of women that clearly differs from the power of men

[This] power from within is not a power of control, but one which comes from valuing self, community and experience It is a power which can heal and renew, exemplifies compassion even when violent, and strives to contribute to an ultimately positive outcome for the greater good This is in contrast with the outcome in which there must be a loser in a contest of wills

The fourteen chapters of the anthology represent a variety of ethnographic and text-based insights into the complex significance of female divinities in the Hindu world and discuss their relationship with actual social and political attitudes towards women in India Moreover, most of the contributors have followed the editors' reflexive appeal 'to think about



the relation one has to what one studies', and produced interesting and contrasting reflections on what it means to relate the primarily 'Western'-rooted feminist discourse to the distinctly Indian symbolism of female divinities. Ultimately, perhaps the most intriguing conclusion that one can draw from the book is that the Indian Goddess provides a model of women's strength, though she does not exactly meet the criteria of what a 'Western' perspective would consider feminist.

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**Ananta Kumar Giri** *Building in the margins of shacks: The vision and projects for Habitat for Humanity* New Delhi: Orient Longman, 2002, xvii + 298 pp., Rs 475 (hb) ISBN 81-250-2181-7

This book presents an ethnographic account of Habitat for Humanity International, a voluntary organisation that has emerged as a transnational ecumenical movement for building houses for the needy. Based on anthropological fieldwork and qualitative tools of data collection such as participant observation and interview, it describes the programmes, activities and the vision of Habitat in cross-cultural settings like the USA and India. The fieldwork has been carried out in four different sites: Americus (Georgia) and Immokalee (Florida) in the USA, and Khamam (Andhra Pradesh) and Koovappallay (Kerala) in India. The activities of Habitat have been perceived from various viewpoints, especially from that of a social movement, philanthropy and globalisation. Attributes/variables such as morality, spirituality, altruism, voluntarism, etc. have been empirically analysed.

Apart from narrating the success story of Habitat (its genesis, growth and identity formation) in the USA and India, the author also attempts to portray how the Habitat has become a global covenant. To posit Habitat as a movement, he has highlighted its various dimensions, nature and scope. Is Habitat a global movement? A transformative movement? A grass roots movement? A unique movement (as it combines morality, economy, etc.)? An identity movement? A spiritual movement? These have been discussed to whet the appetite of the reader.

The author has provided a balanced assessment of the Habitat. He has appreciated its positive aspects and critically discussed its inherent problems. It is pointed out how the middle class paternalism, inadequate

internationalism, and lack of genuine partnership among the homeowners affect the Habitat's activities. Comparison is drawn between practical spirituality and the spirituality propagated by the Habitat. The book portrays the interface of spirituality, voluntarism and altruism in popularising and spreading the Habitat movement.

Another interesting feature of the book is that the author's analysis is based on the dialectics of local and the global. He considers Habitat's activities a convergence of Friedman's structural globalisation 'encompassment' and cultural globalisation 'relativisation'. Moreover, by examining the activities of Habitat at the threshold of multiple theoretical perspectives, he has widened the scope of interpretation of voluntary activity empowered by spirituality. The reader may be puzzled to seek an answer whether spirituality and activism are complimentary to each other, and whether they can be integrated. Nevertheless, by linking spirituality (religion) with voluntarism (activism) in a humanitarian venture, the author makes his readers to ponder whether the movements arising thereof can be sustained and institutionalised, and whether their interface necessitates a trend in fomenting many such transformative movements.

The present work is a useful contribution to the third sector knowledge. The theme is well discussed with insights drawn from extensive fieldwork and sound theoretical thinking. The narratives of the volunteers/respondents on different aspects make this volume lively. The unconventional yet the interdisciplinary theme of the book that has contemporary relevance will benefit a wider audience cutting across disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and social work.

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**André Béteille** *Equality and universality: Essays in social and political theory*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, x + 269 pp., Rs 545 (hb), ISBN 019-566260-1

Of the three collections of essays André Béteille has recently published, the one under review turns on questions of equality and inequality. Following his training as anthropologist at Calcutta and Delhi, he has worked on moving into the *sociological* tradition and has practised it consciously, rigorously, imaginatively, and unflamboyantly for four decades. He sees himself as a theorist—not on the grand scale of Max Weber or

Talcott Parsons, but as analyst of issues and concepts—above all those concerning inequality, elucidating, in measured para after measured para, their varied shades of meanings and their interrelationships and contrasts. The ten essays assembled here, and two reviews as appendices, come from work since the early 1990s, though many revisit themes long familiar.

These essays discuss questions of inequality in India historically, in contemporary society, and in public discussions that would bear on the future. Discussions of the past largely re-state the sociological understanding achieved during the 20th century, reproducing its entrenched prejudices by focusing on matters of status alone, in the caste order, and ignoring inequalities of wealth and power down the millennia. Inequalities today are handled in broad strokes: the growing importance of education, occupation, and income—and how the new order contrasts with the old—and the consequences of processes flowing from the Constitution. Untouchability has been declining, but incidents of violence against the lowest castes have been increasing, our author does not ask why.

Béteille approaches the future in terms not of predicting what it would be like, but of analysing the habits of mind expressed in public discussions of equality and inequality which would shape their future in India. His critique rests on general understandings of the imperatives that make for societal inequalities. Some of the simplest societies apart, societies are differentiated internally, and certain kinds of social *difference* get marked with inequality. In the main essays, this imperative to inequality is attributed only to *evaluation*, that is, to the play of values in relation to the attributes whose differences are recognised as significant, but one of the 'reviews' makes amends by noticing the consequences of the need for institutional coordination, where *authority* comes into play. Having secured this conceptual high ground, Béteille can puncture many balloons filled with equality—and despatch numerous other sacred cows looming over so much of India's public space.

Then there is the *transmission* of inequality. Béteille has now been arguing for a long time that the principal social mechanism for transmitting social inequalities in contemporary India, as elsewhere, is not caste (*pace* Mandal), nor even class, but the *family*, which conveys to its children crucial kinds of capital: cultural (attitudes towards, and access to, broad swathes of ideas and skills) and social (networks centred on family, neighbourhood, club, school, and the like). The paradox is that the most ambitious efforts at combating the family (or class) as an agent for transmitting privilege, say in the former Soviet Union, could only be made by

strengthening the state and its agencies enormously, that is, by greatly increasing the inequalities of power—which made things worse

That brings me to the comparative framework, which Bêteille inscribes on his banner boldly, but there is meanwhile the question of ‘universality’, the second term in the title, which our author uses in an unusual sense. His argument is that it is idle to project for the future visions of equality in such matters as wealth, education, health care, or power. Such aspirations may be seductive, these are not realisable. What could be realisable—given the will and the application—is a package of citizenship rights for everyone, on a ‘universal’ basis: a minimum of income and shelter, literacy and some education, basic health care, immunity from arbitrary exercise of force or power by others, and so forth. A society can work on enlarging its package of citizenship rights over time. These things lie in the realm of the practical, dreams of thoroughgoing equality only in that of fantasy.

In conclusion, a query on Bêteille’s comparativism. In approaching Indian society, Bêteille seeks the advantage of a comparative perspective, principally from Europe. Alexis de Tocqueville on America is a favourite point of reference for considering what to expect when established hierarchies come under assault. Twentieth century British experience in stratification, and a few anthropological monographs, are brought in, and there are passing references to the United States, Soviet Union, and South Africa. To lean on the West for perspective has, of course, long been part of sociological stock-in-trade, and many of us move between the West and India effortlessly. Yet, one wonders on the silences. China is admittedly difficult, especially since libraries in India are loath to buy on pre-Revolutionary China. But Islam? Surely, the Islamic tradition has, for fourteen centuries, offered a challenging contrast to the Brahmanical tradition on questions of inequality within the subcontinent for much of that period. Bêteille writes at length about contrasts, and interactions, between the West and the Brahmanical tradition (which he mistakes for India). Why does he avoid the contrasts, and interactions, along the other two sides of the triangle: the West and Islam, and Islam and the Brahmanical tradition? Is it merely that he partakes of the more general prejudice among Indian sociologists about things Islamic?

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**Anthony Parel** (ed) *Gandhi, freedom, and self-rule* New Delhi Vistaar Publications, 2002, ix + 164 pp, Rs 190 (pb) ISBN 81-7829-188-6

The essays in this volume discuss the four aspects of freedom as delineated by Mahatma Gandhi: sovereign national independence, political freedom of the individuals, freedom from poverty, and the capacity for self-rule or spiritual freedom. According to Gandhi, human well-being requires the simultaneous enjoyment of all these aspects of freedom. *Swaraj* is a state of being of individuals and nations, and non-violence is a means to *swaraj*. India is a multi-ethnic, multi-caste, multi-religious and multi-linguistic country. For Gandhi, independence means freedom that individuals enjoy regardless of their various differences.

In his introductory essay, Anthony J. Parel gives a brief account of Gandhi's notion of *swaraj* in the context of India and the West. He concludes that *swaraj* for Gandhi was an 'all-satisfying goal for all time'. Gandhi wanted India 'to come into her own', and he believed that India could do so only if she realised *swaraj* in all its four aspects.

Antony Copley examines Gandhi's thoughts on freedom and self-rule in the context of Western libertarianism. Ronald Terchek argues that self-rule is Gandhi's highest goal and it guides his thinking about non-violence, democratic policies, economics and modernity. Dennis Dalton examines the question of ends and means in Gandhi's political philosophy in comparison with such Western thinkers as Trotsky, Huxley, and Marx.

Judith Brown declares that Gandhi was a great defender of the rights of the oppressed. Brown also points out that liberal theorists of the modern West are sceptical about society and humanity itself. Gandhi does not share their scepticism. He saw human beings as capable of discovering the truth about themselves and society. According to Brown, Gandhi believed that in the moral universe rights remain correlated to duties: just as I have a right to be protected from harm, so have I a duty not to harm others.

Fred Dallmayr discovers Gandhi as a great teacher of modern times. His comparison of Gandhi with contemporary defenders of freedom as Taylor and Arendt is notable. Sudarshan Kapur's vision of the historical challenges that Gandhi's notion of *swaraj* had to face from the ideology of Hindutva-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, the Viswa Hindu Parishad and Bharatiya Janata Party is misconceived. In his essay, Stephen Hay notes that Gandhism can help solve some of the major problems—such as violence, poverty, degradation of environment and moral devaluation—

facing the contemporary world. He also highlights Gandhi as a man of prayer.

Contributors to this volume try to explore the major themes of concern to Gandhi—freedom and self-rule in Western and Eastern philosophies. As such, this volume is a welcome addition to the literature on Gandhian thoughts.

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**Birinder Pal Singh** *Violence as political discourse: Sikh militancy confronts the Indian state*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2002, 244 pp., Rs. 350 (hb). ISBN 81-7986-006-X

The decade of 1980s was a period of crises and confusions. Indian society witnessed various new social movements that questioned the basic assumptions and values around which the post-colonial ruling elites of India were seeking to build the new nation. The legitimacy of ideas like development, modernisation and national unity was challenged from various quarters. Environmentalists, feminists and human rights activists raised doubts about the wisdom of pursuing the project of development that uprooted the poor and marginalised women, various ethnic and regionalist movements questioned the territorial integrity of the Indian nation. Perhaps the most challenging of these was the Sikh militant movement that appeared in Punjab during the 1980s.

The Sikhs of Punjab had been a well-integrated community. They had participated in India's struggle for freedom with much enthusiasm and had sacrificed more than any other community for the nation. Economically also they had done quite well during the post-independence period. Thanks to the success of Green Revolution, Punjab emerged as the most prosperous state of the country. It was in this backdrop that the rise of a militant ethnic movement in the state puzzled many. Scholars and journalists produced a large volume of literature on the 'crisis', trying to identify various causes and contingencies that had led to such a mobilisation.

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of the 'crisis' in Punjab was the extensive use of 'violence' as a mode of political action by militant groups. The Indian state too used a good deal of it in dealing with the Sikh militants. Birinder Pal Singh begins by pointing to the centrality of this fact in the politics of 1980s in Punjab. Though, virtually everyone who

wrote on Punjab referred to violence, and decried its use counterpoising it to the pacifist idea of the founder Guru of the Sikhs, no one has really examined the phenomenon of violence *per se* from a social scientific perspective. Why was violence used so extensively? What did it mean to the militant? What were they trying to communicate with violence and to whom or with what purpose? What is the status of violence in Sikh religious philosophy? Singh argues that, if we want to find answers to such questions, we need to look at violence as a 'discourse', a mode of communication between the Sikh militant on one side and the Indian state on the other. This discourse, according to him, is imbued with 'rich political content that needs to be understood and interpreted for a better understanding of the Punjab problem' (p. 19).

The underlying plea of such an argument is to assert that the much-maligned militants, who indulged in such violence and became victims of the State violence, were not mere 'criminals' or 'terrorists', as often projected by the state or in popular media, but they too had a political point to make. Though Singh makes it explicit that he does not intend to justify violence, he does argue for 'a comprehensive understanding of the nature and character of violence of the Sikh militants from their perspective' (p. 20).

However, Singh has not done any first-hand fieldwork among the Sikh militants. His study is based primarily on various kinds of writings produced by the Sikh militants. These include small booklets, magazines, pamphlets, wall posters, handouts and the statements they issued to the press. Similarly, he also collected literature produced by various agencies of the Indian state that represented its position on the Sikh militancy.

Though Singh does not set out to write yet another book on the 'Punjab crisis' by providing a chronology of events, his book does not read very differently from other studies of the crisis. In other words, he does not focus exclusively on the phenomenology of violence of the 1980s in Punjab. After providing an overview of the available theoretical literature on the subject of violence, including religious violence, the main text of the study typically begins with locating the origins of Sikh militancy. As is mostly agreed among the students of Punjab politics, the starting point of the 'crisis' was the confrontation of the followers of Sant Bhinderanwale with members of the Nirankari sect on the day of Baisakhi, 13 April 1978. Moreover, he divides the progression of the Sikh militancy like one would a typical social movement into various phases, and identifies its points of culmination and 1992 as the year when it declined or ended. As the movement progressed, the nature of participation and forms

of violence changed. In its early phase, the movement was largely confined to urban areas and the participation was also more from among the urban castes of the Sikhs, college students and lower-level employees. In the post-Operation Blue Star period, many Sikhs who occupied prestigious administrative jobs resigned from their positions and joined the '*panthic* struggle'. The middle peasantry, Singh claims, got attracted towards militancy during this phase. While the Sikhs form landowning caste, the *Jatts* dominated the movement, those from the menial castes too had a significant presence.

As for the self-perception of the Sikh militants, or ideology of the movement, they did not see violence as an end in itself. Speaking almost in the language of contemporary dalit movements and left-wing radicals, they viewed the Indian state as being dominated by the Brahmins and Baniyas, and emphasised the need for building a broader alliance with other minorities, dalits and the poor. Singh argues that apart from using the Sikh religious philosophy in their notion of alternative society, an element of Marxist ideology was also present that had come into the movement through the ex-naxalites who joined some militant groups. While the militants viewed the Indian state as oppressive and unjust, the Indian state in its documents presented the Sikh militants as 'separatist gangs', which included ordinary 'criminals', 'smugglers', 'anti-national elements' and 'naxalites'. In the state's view, their activities posed a serious threat to the unity and territorial integration of India. Even when they were viewed sympathetically, the state saw them as 'misguided' youth who needed to be brought back into the national mainstream forcibly.

As mentioned in the beginning of the review, a large volume of literature was generated on the rise of militancy in Punjab during the 1980s. Much of that literature, including some by professional social scientists, approached the movement purely in terms of a 'crisis' or a 'problem'. Crises and problems are analysed to seek solutions. Birinder Pal Singh's book is different in this regard. Not only does he provide us with the other side of the story, the viewpoint of the Sikh militants, but also presents violence as a real social and political process. However, while doing so, at places, particularly in the last two chapters, he does get carried away and begins to sound like he is arguing for the cause of the militant. While there is nothing wrong in having political biases *per se*, it could become a problem when one is seeking to analyse sociologically something as complex as the discourse of violence.

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**B.V. Bhosale** *Charmakars in transition* Mumbai Nurali Prakashan Company, 2003, xi + 152 pp, Rs 200 (pb)

Charmakar is an important dalit caste in Maharashtra. The members of this caste seek better identity and overall upliftment by associating themselves with Phule-Ambedkar ideology. They call themselves 'Hindu Chambhar', but they have no conception of *gotra* and are not aware of subcaste distinctions. Traditionally, they made leather goods in rural areas. However, over the years, they have experienced changes in varied fields.

Studying the Charmakars from a sociological perspective is the aim of this book. Here, B V Bhosale gives a panoramic view of the community, its socio-economic conditions, family organisation, educational and economic benefits they have received through governmental welfare measures and the policy of positive discrimination, and the change in their attitude towards their institutions like marriage, family, kinship, caste, etc. Centuries of deprivation, restricted accesses, and cultural marginalisation arouse their unease. Stresses and strains they face in their relationship with socially higher-ranked groups, hegemonic attitudes they encounter from outsiders, attacks and atrocities they witness while trying to realise their aspirations and claiming their identities remain the main focus of this work. Bhosale states that, over the years, Charmakars have become more conscious politically and sensitive socio-economically. Being an integral part of the larger social structure, they have tasted the fruits of upliftment through modern education, employment and legislation. Some of Bhosale's findings are interesting. For example, that unlike Nav-Bouddhas and Mahars, the Charmakars had for long remained loyal to the Congress party. But, with changing times, they have changed their allegiance to other parties like the Shiv Sena and the Bharatiya Janata Party, thereby displaying their attitudes towards change.

Negating the most popular understanding that Charmakars are supporters of dalit leaders like B R Ambedkar and others, Bhosale shows that they have often supported these leaders and at others, have distanced themselves from their movements. Being an insider, Bhosale provides thought-provoking and insightful understanding of their position in the social mainstream. In lucid language and commanding style he identifies the degrees and directions of their social mobility, their interaction patterns, their different spheres of life including family, occupation, education, migration, motivation, participation etc. His findings do not fit into

the conventional ideas about the community. As such, his book offers a new vista in the literature on dalits.

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**Daniel W. Crowell** *The SEWA movement and rural development: The Banaskantha and Kutch experience*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, xxi + 236 pp., Rs 280 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-9582-X

This book is a valuable contribution to the field of sociology of rural development. It is about the efforts of Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), Ahmedabad towards mobilisation and integrated development of the unorganised rural women in Banaskantha and Kutch Districts of Gujarat. During this process, SEWA played the catalytic role in fostering an interest in change among the women, providing them access to information and ideas, tapping their collective strength, and lending purpose and direction to their unity.

The book traces the history of SEWA, analyses its programme interventions, the grass roots mechanisms used and organisational structure evolved during 1988-98, and the impact these made on women's living conditions, psychology and their emergence as a formidable force. It documents the development initiatives and experiments in water management, dairying, etc., and analyses the process adopted in organising people for self development and empowerment.

Founded in 1972, SEWA, during the first fifteen years of its existence, restricted itself to the self-employed women of Ahmedabad, and then turned towards 'organisation and struggle' of more than 2.20 lakhs rural women through Banaskantha DWCRA Mahila Sewa Association (BDMSA) and Kutch District Rural Development Association (KDRDA) – a process described as a *movement*, being distinct from a non-governmental organisation. The author cautions against substituting it by 'formal sector approach' of the government-run programmes as a measure to ensure greater productivity and income security, and asserts that SEWA's non-formal approach can eliminate several limitations of the former, namely, charity type programme, target orientation, top-down process, specified time-frame and being alien to the people. He views employment opportunity as the 'foundation of rural development strategy' and 'organisation building' as the main path of 'sustainable development'. This is a

marked shift from the centralised government programme to decentralised people's programme

The book is divided into eleven chapters besides an 'Epilogue Earthquake relief and recovery'. The first chapter outlines the salient features of SEWA's experiment and the lessons drawn from it, the next five chapters are devoted to the analysis of rural development approach as followed in Banaskantha District. These chapters address issues such as watershed development, forestry and minor forest products, dairy and craft cooperatives, rural micro-finance, and health and nutrition. SEWA's experiences in Banaskantha as replicated in Kutch Craft Association (KCA) in the border district is the focus of Chapter seven. The next two chapters are devoted to people's response to issues concerning panchayat raj institutions and the cyclone of 1998. The remaining chapters and Epilogue are devoted to an analysis of the contributions of SEWA, and its emerging role in development and mitigation of natural crises.

The Kutch District, despite its unfavourable climatic conditions, has nurtured a rich tradition of embroidery, mirror work, and tie-and-dye textile having substantial commercial value. However, due to the exploitation by the middlemen, unemployment, and the vagaries of the monsoon, most people are below the poverty line. SEWA, therefore, concentrated on craft production groups and building of KCA, upgradation of vocational skills, and market support for increasing income. The activities gradually covered dairy cooperative and social forestry. The success of BDMSA and KCA made the Government of Gujarat replicate the model of people's empowerment through community-based convergence elsewhere.

Chapter 8, analyses the impact of women empowerment on panchayat elections. In the 1994 local elections, sixty-one active KCA members were elected as *sarpanches*. SEWA took up their capacity building and awareness generation. In the chapter 'The cyclone of 1998', SEWA's response to the calamity is highlighted. The 'Epilogue' highlights SEWA's role in surveying the impact of disaster and launching of the recovery programmes. An overview of SEWA's efforts is provided under 'SEWA in the new millennium' with a focus on (a) capital formation, (b) capacity building, (c) social security, and (d) organised/collective strength. Chapter eleven—'A different kind of deregulation'—highlights the role of civil society and community-based organisations in 'directing the development of the people's sector' and 'sustainable development'. The book, thus, contains the varied events and experiences, it analyses the underlying forces and conceptualises the process in terms of the fundamentals of successful integrated rural development.

The book is a useful guide for grass roots workers, social scientists and policy makers interested in understanding the dynamics of rural development

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**David Rubinstein** *Culture, structure and agency Toward a truly multi-dimensional society* Thousand Oaks Sage Publications, 2001, xii + 243 pp., \$ 31.95 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-1928-7

In this slim but tightly argued and excellently documented monograph, David Rubinstein engages the reader in the debate between those who believe that 'behaviour is mainly controlled by cultural training' and those who 'emphasise priority of social structure' in governing the behaviour of individuals. He proposes, at the outset, to attempt a synthetic or dialectical approach. He elaborates on many conceptions and definitions of culture. About 'social structure', he clarifies that it means 'the structure of opportunities', that is, an array of costs and benefits, and shows how they shape or mutually constitute each other. As mediating between the two he discovers 'agency', which he considers as the degree to which persons are authors of their own conduct or are controlled by 'external' social forces. The synthesis of the two conceptions requires agency, that is, to a high degree, social actors constitute each in the light of other. Thus, he attempts to resolve the problem of a synthesis of culture and social structure as 'determinants' by taking agency together.

Well grounded, documented and elaborated in nine chapters, the book dwells on the definitions of three key concepts—culture, social structure, and agency—and gives detailed analysis of almost all well-known theoretical accounts of sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers and historians. In two chapters Rubinstein deals with structural explanations and highlights the contributions that provide for a deterministic view of social structure. Simultaneously, he takes note of the weaknesses, wherever, even minor ones, discoverable in the structural explanations and criticisms thereof. In this he pleads for and discovers structure as opportunity. In doing so, he picks up evidence from well-known structuralists of the 20th century even for explaining deviance and poverty in the United States.

In two chapters Rubinstein explores the concept of culture by prominently referring to Wittgenstein. He claims that culture in its contents is

'indeterminate' and, hence, open to opportunistic 'reading' by the practical actor. His synthesis starts by discovering opportunity in both the explanations, structural and cultural. He further asserts that culture is necessary to the contribution of opportunity. Thus, by citing examples, he arrives at 'culture as adaptive to the array of opportunities and hence virtually irrelevant as a cause of conduct'. He discovers that there are many non-instrumental dimensions of culture and synthesis of cultural and structural explanations often fail to recognise the autonomy of culture.

In the last four chapters, Rubinstein narrates specific cases of prominent authors and formulates a case for the synthesis of culture, structure and agency. Accordingly, he states, 'The issue of agency has been broached in the portrayal of culture and social structure as constituted by social actors'. He deliberates upon instrumentality and rationality, and discusses the problematic of culture and instrumental conceptions of agency. He discusses the varying relationships among culture, desires and opportunities that intermingle and seek varying priorities in varying contexts. Finally, Rubinstein argues that structural explanation suggests a convenient means of social reform.

The book has a novel theme and it is a compound set of interwoven ideas and theoretical propositions. To an average reader, what Rubinstein suggests initially does not finally appear resolved as clear and manifest synthesis in simpler words. As a whole, the book provides a highly nutritious food for thought. It is an example of a well-documented contribution to theoretical sociology, a reading well suited to the 'above average' reader.

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**G. Ram** *Politics, development and modernization in tribal India: A study of a Bhil village panchayat in Rajasthan*. Delhi: Manak Publications, 2001, ix + 290 pp., Rs. 600 (hb). ISBN 81-7827-026-9

This book tries to analyse the structural and functional aspects of the statutory village council of Alsigarh Gram Panchayat among the Bhils in Rajasthan. Based on a survey of the panchayat elections and the elected representatives, it discusses political formations, economic development and the process of modernisation. It is argued that some institutions of the traditional society, like *gotra*, caste and *phala*, still have a bearing on democratic formations and structures of the present panchayat bodies.

Except for the fact that the panchayat is situated among the Bhils, the conclusion does not relate specifically to tribals alone. A comparative focus on tribals is missing from the study.

Two themes stand out in the book. The major theme concerns the structures and changes in the emerging leadership through half-a-century of panchayat institutions. It also touches upon the political formations and conflict resolutions that have taken place in the panchayat-based development activities. The second theme deals with some aspects of social change that has taken place in the village.

One gets the impression that the book is not properly focused on the themes. Many pages are devoted to the historical aspects of the locale and the tribe, but their relevance to the themes on hand is not brought out. Discussion on key concepts lacks clarity and refinement. For example, the panchayat leaders are classified into several groups and sub-groups (pp 112-13), but this classification is of doubtful validity in understanding leadership formations. Sixty-nine pages of statistical data in the appendices, without adequate reference to them in the main text, seem superfluous.

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**Laurie L. Patton (ed.)** *Jewels of authority: Women and textual tradition in Hindu India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, xxii + 228 pp., Rs 545 (hb), ISBN 0-19-566404-3

‘Women in Hinduism’ is a theme of much interest to scholars these days, and one has seen the publication of a variety of works studying women saints, gender, kinship and religion, cults and women and the like. This volume brings together essays that seek to examine women’s negotiation of Brahmanical authority. Several essays look at textual traditions and debates and try to locate their understanding of the functions and position of women in relation to the conduct of ritual or the management of various household situations.

Most of the authors are experts in religion or language, though there is the odd sociologist and anthropologist among them. They are all women, and the editor traces the origin of the volume to the ‘thought experiment’ that queried ‘What would happen if some of the leading women Sanskritists in the country (the United States of America) gathered

to talk about their work and concerns about gender?" (p xiii) This book is a product of that original question, though the Sanskritists were obviously joined along the way by other specialists

There are several ways in which to focus on or contextualise women's voices in religious history. One could unearth forgotten voices, especially those of women themselves, who defied the Canon, resisting in various ways the patriarchal authority of Hindu Brahmanical tradition. By and large, this is not the path chosen by the writers for this volume, except perhaps for Ann Gold's piece on women's ritual expressions from rural Rajasthan. The second mode is that described by Vijaya Ramaswamy in her book *Walking naked: Women, society, spirituality in south India* (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1997, p. 10): 'all traditional (essentially 'high' or Sanskritic) texts which valorise woman as an ideal foil to the man in a patriarchal society have to be read against the grain in order to break textual boundaries and open the texts to alternative readings'. This is again a mode not chosen by the contributors, who rather than opening the texts they examine to radically alternative readings, are at ease in keeping themselves to a much more limited exercise, described by the editor of the volume, as a 'close' textual analysis.

As such, several essays concentrate on details of debates centred around women (Vedic *mīmāṃsā*, by Mary McGee, medieval Vaishnava, by Katherine Young), texts composed by women (Vasudha Narayanan), or the specific problems regarding the rights and agency of women, especially with regard to the giving of gifts in the Vedas, the epics and other poetic sources (Ellison Findly, Stephanie Jamison) or with regard to the cure of childbirth problems (Laurie L. Patton). Two papers view discourses from more recent history: 19th century colonial reform, by Nancy Falk, and models of the Rashtriya Sevika Samiti, by Paula Bacchetta.

The text retains the quality of conversation, with each author referring us back and forth to the arguments of the other contributors. This makes for a more tightly-knit volume, and clearly brings out the continuing intellectual dialogue that must be part of the interaction of these writers with each other and with other colleagues in the field. One must mention a quarrel with the volume: the print is too fine, and the font, too small. Reading the volume is a little difficult as a consequence.

When one overcomes this, however, the book makes interesting and engaging reading. It contributes to the growing scholarship on gender in the context of Hinduism, employing 'close textual and ethnographic analysis' (p. 8) to replace earlier tendencies in the literature towards broader and less refined statements. Its sweep from the early period to the modern

also provides the reader with multiple contexts and phases within the central themes explored

One of the challenges of such research is the engagement with scholarship from the country or region being studied. Perhaps because of the lack of availability of texts or the somewhat constrained character of United States academia at large, not many contributors refer to Indian scholars publishing in India. Where such texts are cited, the reference is often to the foreign (American) edition. Lack of ‘thick’ engagement, if I may transpose Clifford Geertz’s term here, can sometimes lead to a few problems.

Consider Bacchetta’s rendering of Rashtriya Sevika Samiti discourses as containing elements related to *garh* (the home) and *babir*, the latter word translated by her as ‘world’. Now, *babir* is not an identifiable word in Hindi or Marathi. One does not know to which language it belongs or whether it is simply a mangled version of *bahar* or *baheer*, a word generally used with *ghar* (*garh*) in the sense she seems to imply. Even so, *baheer* can have several meanings, depending on context: the outside, public space, the strange or foreign or perhaps the world!

The expression of a need for greater engagement with Indian scholarship is not, of course, something triggered by this volume, but a more general plea. That aside, this is a book that will interest not just Sanskritists, but South Asian gender specialists, religious studies experts and anthropologists.

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**Mamta Rao** *Public interest litigation in India: A renaissance in social justice*. Lucknow: Eastern Book Company, 2002, xvi + 262 pp., Rs 155 (pb). ISBN 81-7012-725-4

Public Interest Litigation (PIL) now occupies a prominent place not only in the legal circles but also in the socio-political life. The term has gathered momentum over the years, and has heralded new initiatives in the public sphere through court actions. Mamta Rao’s book views PIL as ‘a renaissance in social justice’. It is divided into six chapters dealing with various issues related to PIL—its origin, growth, development and dilemmas—while keeping the focus on the question of social justice.



The introductory chapter is devoted to the definition and description of PIL, its emergence and development, particularly in American society, and its gradual incursion into the Anglo-Saxon jurisprudence. This chapter also provides an Indian perspective on PIL. The second chapter highlights the role of law in ensuring social justice for the disadvantaged and marginalised sections. The third chapter discusses the question of *locus standi*, and appraises the reader of the multiple problems involved in getting access to law and courts which negate the basic purpose of solving problems through legal process. In most countries it has been found that the underprivileged sections find it difficult to put their claim before the appropriate forum and obtain justice. Poverty, ignorance, economic cost, intimidation, reluctance and a host of other problems make the access to justice beyond the vast masses of people. This necessitates taking a hard look at the issue of *locus standi*.

The last chapter tracks and tries to capture the controversial and the most talked about debate on PIL, that is, its lacunae, and limitations and liabilities. Of late, the question has been raised about the competency and consistency of courts in deciding matters of public interest, as courts are only expected to interpret and not make the law. This also brings into purview the threat of judiciary encroaching upon other areas, notably the space reserved for the executive and the legislature. This is a dangerous trend, because the Constitution is based on the principle of separation of powers and harmonious construction, and its dilution will spell doom for democracy. Known as 'judicial activism', this trend of overstepping the boundary may ultimately lead to the eclipse of judicial sanctity. The way cases of corruption, arbitrariness and malpractices are reported against the members of the judiciary, a serious and sensitive view of the context becomes mandatory. The author has given enough case analyses, commentaries and references for the reader to form his own judgement.

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**M.N. Srinivas** *Religion and society among the Coorgs of south India* (with an Introduction by André Bételle) New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, xxix + 279 pp., Rs. 495 (hb) ISBN 019-565874-4

I refrain from writing a *review* in the real sense of M.N. Srinivas's *Religion and society among the Coorgs of south India* for two reasons.

(1) this is one of the basic books I have, as many of us, grown up reading, and one which has taught me to appreciate the place of religion in the life of people in an extremely pragmatic way, and (2) the noun 'review' implies a critical appraisal which seems inappropriate at this stage when the book has already been widely recognised, referred and quoted. What one can delightfully do, however, is to bring out the nubs and nuances in the book that make for its outstanding character.

The reissue of this book by the Oxford University Press after fifty years of its publication has come at an appropriate time when anthropological studies of religion have covered a long trajectory from Hegelian metaphysics through Lévi-Straussian structure and hermeneutics to the present day emphasis on polyvocality and multiple realities. The shift, in essence, is from a search for origin and function of religion to its articulation in the lives and lifestyles of people making for their identity and distinctiveness. It is against this backdrop that the book assumes greater relevance in an age when the social fabric is torn into pieces by divisive forces.

In his 'Introduction' to the new impression of the book, André Bételle explains the affinity, as also departure, of this work from two of its contemporaries—*Nuer religion* (Evans-Pritchard 1956) and *Divinity and experience* (Lienhardt 1961)—which treat religion as overbearing on social structure. To Srinivas, social structure provides the analytical framework for understanding the many dimensions of life and existence—kinship, politics, as also religion. Srinivas's unfailing conviction that the concept of social structure provides the distinctive character to anthropology as a discipline was born out of his personal and academic association with A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. More important, the 'Introduction' brings to the fore the intellectual climate in which the work is contextualised and the undercurrents that run throughout the text, and Srinivas's thought process, influences, commitments and all that went into making of the pioneering contribution to anthropological thought.

Radcliffe-Brown's 'Foreword' to the first edition of the book, besides presenting an overview of the text, also explains the process of exploring religion in the context of social structure. He points out that the only method by which it is possible to comprehend the function of religion in society is by way of analytic descriptive studies of religions of diverse types, so that by systematic comparison it is possible to arrive at some general theory. The Coorg case is of particular import and interest in this context given the fact of three structural systems—each with its own integrity in terms of religious behaviour and obligations, yet interdependent in

being a part of the total complex of the social structure. These consist, in large part, of their (1) the *okka*, which is the patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal joint family, (2) the village community, which includes members of different castes, and (3) the wider Hindu religious community.

A major contribution of this work lies in developing an integrative perspective on religion that links the three levels into a complex whole. The author meanders in and out of them effortlessly, much as the Coorgs do in the real life situation, showing the ostensible as also the finer inter-connections between them that are amenable only to one with deep insight. One thread that connects the three levels closely is the agricultural cycle in which events—of sowing, sprouting, growth and harvesting—that evoke concern and anxiety are marked by a well-defined matrix of rituals involving people who belong to different levels. On several occasions, Srinivas draws meaningful parallels between practices of, what he calls, 'All-India Hinduism', 'Peninsular Hinduism', 'Regional Hinduism', and 'Local Hinduism', which is confined to the Coorgs. He writes, 'In a very broad sense it is true that as the area of spread decreases, the number of ritual and cultural forms shared in common increases, conversely, as the area increases, the common forms decrease (p. 215). This enables one to appreciate both Hinduism, in terms of its variants, and the Coorg religion, against the wider backdrop of Hinduism.

Chiefly, the ritual idiom of Coorgs consists of, among others, two pairs of cognitive categories: *mangala* (auspicious ceremony performed on certain occasions in the life of an individual) and *mūrta* (the most important part of the ritual of *mangala*), and *polé* (ritual impurity) and *madi* (ritual purity). *Polé* is of two kinds: ritual impurity in general, and specific forms of ritual impurity, as that resulting from menstruation and childbirth. The notions of ritual purity and ritual impurity regulate relations between different castes. The passage among and between the categories is marked by water, fire, grains of rice, milk, betel leaves, areca nuts all woven into the ritual fabric. Sprinkling of consecrated water, lighting the lamp, saluting the sun, scattering of rice grains, all bring about a change in the ritual status of a person.

The dynamics of Coorg identity lies in the comparative ease with which the Coorgs admit into their fold the non-Coorgs belonging to higher castes, on the one hand, and the same ease with which they claim to be considered as Kshatriyas, on the other. In fact, the Coorgs have been greatly influenced by Sanskritic Hinduism and religious movements like Lingayatism to an extent that the Amma Coorgs (a subdivision of the Coorgs) wear the sacred thread and perform ancestor worship much like

the Brahmins As a group, the Amma Coorgs consists of people who sanskritised their customs and rituals and, in doing so, severed their connections with the parent body Over a period, they demanded a higher social and ritual status in the larger whole in which they once existed anonymously and of which they are now a distinct part

The book is not confined to religion and society among the Coorgs, but through it delves into deeper methodological issues exploring the inter-play between the larger tradition of Hinduism and its regional and local variants meaningfully The broader scope of the work precludes the general concern for an updated database, since fieldwork for the book was conducted during 1940-41 It will surely be valued as much for its perceptive methodological approach as for its critical analysis of the elements constituting the core traditions and institutions of the Coorgs of Karnataka

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**M.S. Gore** *Social development Challenges faced in an unequal and plural society* Jaipur Rawat Publications, 2003, 397 pp, Rs 675 (hb)  
ISBN 81-7033-756-9

The book under review provides a stimulating reading on various dimensions of development It is a collection of papers prepared by M S Gore for different occasions, and which have been published earlier in two separate volumes While its perspective is mainly that of social work, it is helpful in understanding the basic premises of social development and its various facts from other perspectives, too

Though the word 'development' was used for many years to refer primarily to economic development, Gore feels that the concept of 'social development', which is different from economic development, emerged in India out of the many discussions at the national conferences on Community Development Programmes and National Extension Projects So, social development needs to be understood in its broader philosophy and its linkages with the notions of human rights and the fundamental rights

According to Gore, neither the capitalist nor the socialist model of development helps in the neat division of countries in terms of the minimisation of inequalities or of the adequacy of social and welfare services available to the citizens Therefore, social policy issues of development

must be oriented towards distributive justice. This goal can only be achieved when social development is associated with new social values which are rational, secular and egalitarian in nature. With these social values flow the concept of social welfare.

Why does Gore put so much emphasis on social welfare? According to him, it has been a force of change and responsible for the emergence of more humane values. Social welfare can perform two roles: offering special services to those in special needs, and preventing the emergence of new problems of distribution and simultaneously providing motivation for development.

If these objectives have to be fulfilled, the services of social work (a type of professional activity), which can motivate the individuals and groups to meet the challenges of social development, must be taken into consideration. Social work, according to Gore, can play a vital role for making economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for the dignity and fuller realisation of development in terms of social security, minimum standard of living and the provision of opportunities for all. He does not, however, intend to dilute the role of sociologists. He proposes the development of interdisciplinary approach and skills to use available data. Social workers and sociologists together can effectively participate in developmental tasks.

While evaluating the process of social development in India, it is apparent that equitable, secular and democratic goals of society are yet to be achieved. Hence, Gore suggests the establishment of a proper balance between the state, the people and the law enforcement machinery, as it will lead to the realisation of democratic and secularist ideals.

In any society, the government adopts one of three models of social development, depending upon its resources, level of technological development and political opinion. These are the residual model, the achievement performance model, and the institutional redistribution model. Gore suggests that, for a country like ours, the institutional redistribution model would be more appropriate, as it focuses on poverty alleviation and social and welfare services. Here again, he emphasises the role of the social work profession in deciding upon which model is relevant and in which situations.

Concerning the development experience in India between 1947-80, there was a controversy about the path of development called the 'mixed economy'. Socialists viewed that, despite state regulations, a mixed economy is not a socialist economy, and it is subject to similar internal contradictions prevailing in the capitalist economy. In real practice, the

democratic socialist state in India has been seeking to control the economy without really displacing private enterprises. Obviously, there were concerns about strategies of control and freedom adopted by the government from time to time, the failure of the state, and the increasing incidence of poverty. Therefore, opines Gore, the Gandhian and the Sarvodaya thinking are gaining new support.

The merit of the book lies not only in understanding the concept and models of social development, but also in Gore's effort to deal with other related issues such as mobilisation of youth, mass media and mass communication, urbanisation and industrialisation, social reform and law, etc. However, the value of the book would have been enhanced, had the concept and models of social development been examined in the present context of globalisation, liberalisation of economy and the shift in society's orientation from 'welfare' to 'market'. Gore has conceded this himself.

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**M.S. Gore** *Unity in diversity: The Indian experience in nation-building*  
Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2002, 246 pp., Rs 475 (hb)  
ISBN 81-7033-729-1

It is an academically rewarding experience to go through this insightful work by M S Gore. In it, Gore portrays Indian society in all its dimensions and its social ethos in all its manifestations with a degree of coherence and transparency so difficult to achieve. Despite being written for different occasions, the collection of papers here carries an organic coherence and continuity and, just like its title, the book succeeds in achieving its unitary purpose through diverse articles.

The papers focus on diverse issues, events and developments relating to democracy, secularism, nationhood, social transformation, continuity and change in India. The much cherished and oft-quoted claim that Indian society presents a unique case of 'unity in diversity' has come under critical scrutiny. According to Gore, Indian social reality is too complex to be amenable for a purely sociological analysis and it warrants an interdisciplinary approach. Hence, an integrated social science approach is adopted, combining it with historical and comparative perspective, too.

The first article seeks to capture the contemporary social reality, the ethos and pathos, major achievements and failures. It portrays Indian

society as one with enormous potential for growth, but beset with inherent constraints that retard the realisation of this potential. Widespread unrest, communal riots, religious fundamentalism, disoriented younger generation and working class, widespread terrorism amid economic boom and growth in science and technology could be seen as manifestations of a complex social scenario. The article succeeds in exploring and exposing the stark reality underlying a seemingly progressive society. Gore, however, justifies his being optimistic about a turnaround that could herald an era of social justice so fondly envisaged by the nation builders.

The second article analyses the implications of the Gandhian spell on Indian psyche and society. Gandhi's ability to communicate directly with the masses, his sane simplicity coupled with charisma and sympathy for those in distress have been identified as the traits responsible for the impact he exerted on the masses and on social and welfare legislation in independent India.

The next article deals with the interface between socio-economic and politico-cultural developments after independence, and concludes that the developments have been less humane than they ought to have been. Contradicting and intolerant ideologies, conflicting personalities, and the spread of materialism in all walks of life have been viewed as responsible for the present state of affairs. Gore seeks to portray what could be termed the Nehru era of Indian polity and society. Nehru's conception of nationalism and the implications of the departure from this conception in recent years. Although a bit abstract in his exposition, Gore has succeeded in arguing a case for the nation-state pattern of governance for India, though the intricacies inherent to Indian society render it difficult to be achieved in its functional form.

The book also focuses on ethnic diversity and its implications for nationhood in India. Gore provides a threadbare analysis of the ethnic fabric of Indian society, its inherent contradictions, and the difficulties faced in eliciting and ensuring loyalties of diverse ethnic groups to the nation in the process of achieving nationhood.

The seventh article depicts vividly the process of social transformation the Indian society has undergone through the ages. It gives glimpses of Indian society through the events that guided the course of Indian history and, accordingly, it may be taken as a historical account of social change in India.

The next article seeks to develop a paradigm for identification of social transformation in India. India as a nation has adopted the neo-liberal doctrine and is wedded to the policy of welfare state. Through an

ideal mixture of the neo-liberal doctrine and the welfare state policy, coupled with secular, socialist and democratic polity, a transformation is advocated to bring about an egalitarian society. Subscribing to a regional and comparative perspective, the next article analyses social development in Asian countries vis-à-vis that in the West.

As if a cover story, the concluding article presents a mature analysis of interactions and interrelationships across diverse social groupings—religious, racial, linguistic, ethnic and caste—in India at different points of time, and notes that all our claims about having achieved the much lauded ‘unity in diversity’ is at best patchy. As in other articles, Gore proposes a plan of action for achieving this cherished goal.

Although a few statements and generalisations seem impressionistic, the analysis and reasoning about contemporary Indian social reality are well founded. The arguments are based on an exhaustive survey of empirical studies and theoretical literature, which an intellectual of only Gore’s stature could muster and harness.

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**Padma M. Sarangapani** *Constructing school knowledge: An ethnography of learning in an Indian village*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, 308 pp., Rs 350 (pb). ISBN 81-7829-136-3

What gives a distinctive identity to Padma M. Sarangapani’s book is that she has chosen an unknown village school and succeeded in demonstrating that it is important to explore the meanings the children and teachers attach to the process of schooling. There is a widespread belief that there is nothing worth learning about these schools which are thought to be characterised by monotony and dullness. In fact, as the ‘the commonsense of the experience, and especially the obviousness of all that is wrong, makes it seem unnecessary to engage in any deeper way with the inner world of the school’. However, Sarangapani seems determined to interrogate this dominant discourse. Instead of taking things for granted, she discovers Kasimpur—an unknown village in the northern fringe of Delhi, studies the Government Boy’s Primary Model School, evolves a sociological art of listening, and constructs an ethnography of learning. It would not be wrong to say that the reader gets persuaded to appreciate the significance of a research project of this kind.



This intense engagement with the school—and that too gifted with rigorous anthropological gaze and ethnographic sensitivity—enables her to write ten substantial chapters. Her findings are bound to fascinate any student of sociology of education. For example, she begins with a question: even if schooling, as reformers think, is boring and devoid of joyful learning, why is it that the children continue to consider it so important? Schooling, as the text reveals, prepares them to enter the adult world of work. The nature of this work is tempting, it is a 'respectable non-manual work that would bring in a steady income'. If one wishes to strive for such a higher stage in the life cycle, one must say 'no' to the 'playfulness' of childhood, grow serious, and become an *adarsh vidyarthi* (a model student). Not to take schooling seriously is to accept failure. Failure is traumatic, it reminds one of the *anpadh* (an illiterate/unschooled villager) who, unlike a *bada admi*, will not get good jobs! Sarangapani is not wrong when she argues that, in Kasimpur, school rituals and practices bear no relation to the liberal-humanist agenda. Instead, 'the future world of the adult acts on the present in the form of a coercive evaluative discipline'.

Another important fact about schooling that the text depicts is the relationship between the teacher and the taught. What Sarangapani finds in the Kasimpur school is the 'moral and epistemic superiority of the teacher'. It is the teacher who decides what has to be taught and how it has to be learned. It leads to a 'strongly framed curriculum' that negates the learner's subjectivity, her/his experiences, perceptions and intuitive knowledge. Here is a striking illustration from the ethnography of the classroom:

They were reading about Martin Luther King  
*Bhardwaj* (teacher) His only sin was that he was black  
*Manoj* (student) Discrimination on the basis of colour ji!  
*Bhardwaj* (mockingly) You were not born then. How do you know?"

No wonder, learning ceases to be a dynamic/creative experience of exploration and self-discovery. Instead, its only aim is to memorise the 'right answer to a question' as presented in the prescribed text. Everything else is secondary and unimportant. Here is yet another example:

*Krishna Kumari* (teacher) How are newspapers, distributed from the printing office? - Aeroplane, Motorcycle, Train

*She ignored all these and asked them to look at the last sentence of the book which said that motors standing outside the newspaper office take the papers to their destination. She asked the question once again. The answers were the same as before. She made an exasperated sound. Can the train come to the office to collect the paper? Tell me properly.*

*The children now repeated the words in the textbook.*  
*Krishna Kumari* OK, sit down

A damaging consequence of this kind of teaching-learning is that it becomes difficult for the children to correlate school and out-of-school knowledge. As a matter of fact, 'school knowledge seemed to be a passive object to be put into brain by memorisation, perhaps also irrelevant to the real world.

The message that Sarangapani seeks to convey is clear: one needs to study and understand the actual practice of schooling before one begins to think of 'reorientation, training, motivation, community participation, joyful learning and activity-based education'. Kasimpur also demonstrates that the school exists because it fulfils a function. It promises a better world, and indicates the possibility of social mobility. Yet, as Sarangapani's work suggests, in the existing pedagogic milieu, the child finds no space to emerge as an autonomous learner. Possibly she would not deny that it is desirable to alter this form of learning. The reader would not be wrong if he/she expects an enlightening chapter on the possible mode of intervention. But then, though Sarangapani refers to Dewey and Gandhi, she has not reflected much on this crucial issue. A possible reason is that the book has emerged out of her doctoral thesis and, as a result, its technical character tends to restrict the possibility of a transparent/passionate/committed sociology.

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**P.M. Katare and B.C. Barik** (eds) *Development, deprivation and human rights violation*. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2002, 274 pp., Rs 495 (hb) ISBN 81-7033-704-6

This volume is a compilation of papers from a national seminar on 'Rural Development and Human Rights Violation in Western India' organised by the School of Social Sciences, Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada

University, Nanded (Maharashtra) Its objectives are to present the correlated nature of unproductive rural development projects and human rights violations in India, evaluate the performance and commitment of the state, NGOs and public institutions in securing the rights of the rural folk, and speculate how rural society in India can be freed from human rights violations within two decades It contains sixteen papers which address varied areas, from theoretical aspects of human rights to displacement and violation of human rights in rural India

In the introduction, the editors set the tone of this compilation by highlighting the transformation that is taking place in the Indian Economy due to the New Economic Policy (NEP), and its impact on rural development policy formulation, protection of human rights and quality of life of rural Indians They proceed with the assumption that because rural development projects have been unproductive and have failed in eliminating poverty and unemployment, there has been displacement, making human rights violation an everyday phenomenon

There are four articles that undertake a critical examination of how human rights culture can be developed in India where traditions and habits still hold strong Armaity S Desai is of the view that education in India has given young Indians enough goods to become a critical mass in the populace to develop a culture of human rights The gap that we see in democratic India between avowed intentions and actual practices can be overcome only by education that imparts a non-oppressive and non-exploitative attitudes, thus providing a space for social justice

S P Punalekar explains how NEP, in tandem with Structural Adjustment Programme, which centres on adjustment, liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation, leads to severe economic stresses, affecting mostly the vulnerable groups He points out that, within the context of existing disparities, inequality, social handicaps, and the insensitive administrative-legal machinery in India, economic reforms have distorted the picture more, further waning the welfare initiatives by the state To counter this, he prefers strategies like cultivating a sensitive, ethical and humane political perspective, and newer designs of living

Murli Desai argues that the ideology of human rights in the mould of Western modernism will result in imperfection if implemented in a society like India She recommends that before sensitisation and implementation, Indian traditional philosophies and postmodernist ideologies should be taken into consideration, which will bring involvement of the family, community, the state and the market in sustenance of human rights within the society Surendra Singh reveals that the dismal human rights condition

in rural India is due to the failure of the rural social milieu to access the development initiatives

Tribals being an important constituent of the Indian population, this collection has included four articles on Indian tribals in general, by Jagannath Pathy, on Dang tribals, by Satyakam Joshi, on Melghat tribal children, by Ambadas Y. Mohite, and on tribal women in Maharashtra by Shubhangi Gote. All these papers explain the domination, exploitation, displacement, and asymmetrical power relations that the tribals in independent India experience at every level, disrupting their life and leading to violation of their basic rights.

The papers by Nilima Pande, Balgovind Baboo, Jyotsna Bapat, and Supriya Sethi deal with the displacement caused by the construction of dams, the politics of strategic essentialism in its trail, and the consequent human rights violations of the displaced, who are not only marginalised, powerless and socially disarticulate, but also find themselves in the midst of dismantled kinship organisation and dislocated cultural identities. Their findings raise doubts about the efficacy of rehabilitation measures, and suggest some rudimentary counter measures (which may prove equally futile!)

Four disparate articles find a place in this book. Dwarkanath Rath looks at how communalism (Gujarat specific) undermines human rights. It is an interesting read, because it also unveils the preparatory groundwork, that had long been laid, that resulted in Godhra and post-Godhra riots in Gujarat. Writings on the position of women, unorganised workers of ship-breaking yards of Gujarat, and fisherfolk give hint of their low priority status as for their basic rights.

Lofty goals of this volume turn out to be quite mundane as, at the end of its reading, the reader is left with more questions than answers. Disorganised meanderings can hardly be expected to generate any debate or lead for future research. Of course, serious students of human rights may find a couple of meaningful statements, and learn to avoid the pitfalls that can turn their hard labour into a shallow work.

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**P.M. Nair** *Combating organised crime* Delhi Konark Publishers, 2002, xvii + 448 pp , Rs 550 (hb) ISBN 81-220-0629-9

In *Combating organised crime* P M Nair examines the scenario of organised crime and its control in India. In a brief introduction, he outlines the threat of organised crime and the need to study it in all its details. He discusses the various definitions of organised crime given by the UNO and others, but not those by some renowned criminologists. Several features of organised crime are also discussed. Surprisingly, white collar crime and political crime are included under organised crimes, while these are considered separately in criminology today. The book provides information about organised crime gangs in America, Japan, Russia, etc., but this has little significance with reference to India.

The information about various organised criminal groups operating in rural areas and in urban centres in the country forms an extensive part of the book. These groups include Mafias, kidnapping gangs, arms traffickers, narco traffickers, illegal human traffickers, smugglers, etc. Some information about liquor barons, loan sharks, obscenity and pornography racketeers, gambling syndicates, prostitution syndicates, contract killers, etc. would have been useful, as these form an important part of organised crime in India. The book encompasses political crimes, environmental crimes, corruption, terrorism, Naxalism, and cyber crimes which are presently considered as separate categories in contemporary criminology.

The discussion on the theories explaining organised crime does not have much relevance, as these theories are propounded by criminologists to explain criminal behaviour in general. Similarly, the description of various law enforcing agencies has limited relevance to the measures to control organised crime. Yet, strategies to control organised crime suggested by the author are extensive and apparently effective. The role of the Interpol and UNO in controlling organised crimes has been discussed in detail.

The book is lucid in highlighting the various facets of organised crime. It gives extensive exploratory information about organised crimes in India. However, if the contents had been arranged concentrating on the control of organised crimes and the relative preventive measures, the book would have been of great value not only to the students of criminology but also to the functionaries of the criminal justice administration.

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**R. Sooryamoorthy and K.D. Gangrade** *NGOs in India A cross-sectional study* (Contributions in sociology, No 136) Westport, Conn / London Greenwood Press, 2001, xiv + 189 pp, price not mentioned ISBN 0-313-31954-5

The book under review is a welcome intervention in this hour of crisis and controversies surrounding the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). It begins with a prologue providing a synoptic account of the emergence of NGOs in India, their expansion and growth, and how gradually a sense of 'routinisation' has set in leading to their downfall, both in terms of ideology and existence. Chapter 2 deals with the theoretical foundation of the voluntary sector, where it is emphasised that to understand NGOs in any given society one needs to know the context and background of voluntary action. Beginning with an overview of NGO activity in several countries across the world, both developed and the underdeveloped, Chapter 3 traces the origin and development of voluntarism in Indian tradition and the contributions of social reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Swami Vivekananda, etc. in nurturing that tradition. The authors specially acknowledge the impact of Gandhiji and his ideas and prescriptions relating to rural development on NGO movement in India. Based on their studies in Kerala, the authors make a strong case for NGO-government partnership, interaction and collaboration in areas such as education and health. They are, however, cautious. Heavy reliance on government support can lead to the loss of autonomy for the NGOs. It can also lead to distortion of the mission of the organisation and bring in bureaucratisation.

On the crucial question of accountability (Chapter 5), other than financial and technical, the authors emphasise the importance of member-accountability. A member-accountable organisation is the one 'which works with its members to continuously attempt to meet the current and potential expectation of those members'. As an NGO gains in strength, it gradually distances itself from its volunteers and other grass roots level stakeholders, leading to an atmosphere of doubt and incomprehensibility. Member-accountability dispels such misgivings. Chapter 6 highlights the advocacy role of the NGOs. The case of SEWA (Ahmedabad) is illustrative. Struggling hard to work for unorganised and exploited women workers in the informal sector, the organisation succeeded in influencing policies of the government in favour of its women members. Similarly, in areas such as the welfare of destitute persons and children, where a certain level of informality is needed, the NGOs meet the requirement (Chapter

7) That the government has realised this specificity of the NGOs is apparent from the fact that since the First Five-Year Plan the government has evinced a keen interest in involving the NGOs in programmes concerned with destitute persons and children Chapter 8, which dwells upon the life cycle of NGOs in rural development, offers useful insights into the functioning of NGOs in the country, their transition from 'people to project' and how they gradually drop the initial objectives and get trapped in the business of 'wooing' the sponsors—local, national and international

Over all, this book is a good blend of research and information on the subject, and it is sure to be useful to both students and activists alike

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**Sudha Pai** *Dalit assertion and the unfinished democratic revolution The Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh* (Cultural subordination and the dalit challenge, Vol 3) New Delhi Sage Publications, 2002, xiv + 265 pp, Rs 295 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-9627-3

In the annals of Indian politics, there have been few independent dalit political parties Independent Labour Party (1936) and Scheduled Caste Federation (SCF), established by Dr B R Ambedkar before independence, and Republican Party of India (RPI) (1957) and Dalit Panthers, established after independence and the demise of Dr Ambedkar The common denominator in these parties is that they all originated in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency and today's Maharashtra Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is the only party to grow outside Maharashtra and that too in the most populous and caste-ridden state of Uttar Pradesh

It is in this context that the volume under review is an important contribution to the subject of dalit assertion It has admirably chronicled an extraordinary phenomenon, which has not only changed the complexion of state politics in Uttar Pradesh, but has influenced the national politics as well

Sudha Pai has examined the emergence, development, mobilisation strategies, ideology, programmes, leadership and organisation, etc of the BSP Significantly, this study has tried to locate the recent wave of dalit assertion historically Leaving the *bhakti* assertion led by Ravidas and Kabir aside, the study starts recording the history of dalit assertion from

the colonial period and remarks that dalit consciousness arose late in Uttar Pradesh as compared with southern and western India. It delineates 1956 (it must be 1957, as the RPI was first established in that year) as the second phase of dalit assertion in Uttar Pradesh. Without mentioning the details of Dalit Panthers in Uttar Pradesh, the book treats the emergence of BSP as the third phase of dalit assertion.

Evaluating the impact of dalit assertion, the study argues that it is not a product of the mobilisational activities of the BSP. Rather, it is a phenomenon that is broader in scope than the Party, though the rise of a strong dalit party has given the process a fillip. Therefore, 'it has created a new identity, awareness, confidence and self-respect that dalits value and which have changed their perception of themselves and the world around them. Secondly, it has brought them into mainstream politics' (p. 221). This is a fact, no doubt, but the author should have analysed a linear trend in the development of dalit consciousness in Uttar Pradesh that has been on the rise since the formation of SCF. It is true that, with the demise of the SCF, the RPI emerged with greater dalit consciousness in Uttar Pradesh politics. Dalit Panthers took over from the RPI, but by that time the Backward and Minority Community Employees' Federation (BAMCEF), the Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti (DS4) and the BSP had emerged and with them dalit consciousness has reached a higher pitch.

A debatable, yet important, issue mentioned in the book is that the BSP is a product of democratisation of the polity and society and the affirmative action policies of the state. This depicts dalits as passive recipients of socio-political processes, playing down the impact of the struggle that they have waged and which has also been highlighted by the author.

Mounting scathing criticism, Pai argues that the BSP is an Ambedkarite party in purely political terms. According to her, its leadership has a limited vision and is not interested in social transformation or revolution. 'The BSP is explicitly a caste-based party of the dalit-bahujans, more particularly the dalits. Without its caste-based identity, the party has no other means of identification drawn from the better off sections of the dalit community. The leadership of the BSP is, therefore, elitist and conservative in outlook' (pp. 110-11).

Nevertheless, Pai maintains, 'our work attempts a sympathetic, yet critical look at a party' (p. 2). The above criticism does not fall in the 'sympathetic' category. Even if it does, methodologically, it is unethical, because a researcher has to be objective and detached from her/his biases to bring out the full truth of any phenomenon. In the case of BSP, it is more important, as it is now associated with almost 160 million dalits in



India Such a value judgement has blurred the significant facts, which otherwise would have opened new vistas for research

Moreover, the field data from one district of western Uttar Pradesh forms the basis of the study This raises a methodological question Can one generalise for a socially diverse state like Uttar Pradesh based on the data drawn from a particular district? Moreover, the study has also failed to address a few significant issues about the dalit assertion in Uttar Pradesh Though it highlights that the dalit assertion and consciousness in western Uttar Pradesh has been very high in comparison with the eastern region, it does not explain why, in spite of the above stated elements, the BSP did not take roots in the western region first, and instead flourished in the eastern region Was it because of the differences in the nature and composition of population of these areas and the consequent differences in the pattern of exploitation? Or, were there other reasons? Second, the study does not take note of the mobilisation of the lower castes among Muslims and the Most Backward Castes which have broadened the vote and support base of the BSP in Uttar Pradesh Third, it has concentrated mainly on the BSP's effort to capture political power, but fails to explain why the BSP has resigned from power whenever pressed to a corner

Last, but not the least, the book predicts that the BSP has reached a plateau, but this is contradicted in the postscript by depicting the BSP as extending its regional base Not only that the prediction does not seem correct, as the BSP has declared itself to be a party not exclusively of *bahujans* but that of *savarans* What is more, in the 2002 elections it became the number two party in the state, leaving the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Congress behind In the same vein, the book is silent on the process of role reversals which have taken place because dalits have been regularly occupying the highest echelons of power and decision making in the state leading to structural change

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**Satish Deshpande** *Contemporary India A sociological view* New Delhi Viking/Penguin Books, 2003, xi + 213 pp, Rs 350 (hb) ISBN 0-67-004935-2

If the quality of a serious book in the social sciences is judged by the amount of sustained interest it can maintain in the reader, and the time it

takes to go through it, Satish Deshpande's book is an absorbing and frank engagement with the complex realities of contemporary India. It is an intellectual treat, lucid in its exposition, and refreshing, stimulating and not failing to provoke.

Deshpande's methodological critique of Indian sociology for having failed to engage in macro studies of the unfolding complex realities of modern India, lay in its developing as a 'composite' of anthropology and sociology, with a tilt towards the former, concentrating on micro studies of the traditional institutions of caste, kinship, village and tribe in their rural locations, rather than on macro studies of the class structure, cities, markets, industrial relations, or the media.

For him, sociology is all about critiquing the all-pervading 'common-sense', which is to recognise that it 'represents our *unexamined* and often *unconscious* beliefs and opinions', generally 'arrived at unthinkingly, through habit, ignorance or oversight'. Ruling out 'value-neutrality', he recommends the importance of self-reflexivity through 'switching perspectives, by looking at the world from the viewpoints of differently placed persons or groups, or even by imagining a world different from the one we inhabit'. He advises sociologists to develop a 'squint', to be able to look 'London' and also see 'Paris'.

The omnibus concept of modernisation, derived from the European Enlightenment model of unilinear evolution of societies from tradition to modernity, was accepted with reservations by Indian sociologists. By the 1990s, the highly abstract taxonomic synthesis of the 'pattern variables' of Talcott Parsons, gave way to the acceptance of science and 'modern' technology on a rational pragmatic mode. The fact that Nehru drew ingeniously from the secular content of the Soviet (socialist) and the Western (capitalist) model, to fashion a planned mixed-economy model of modernisation, is missed out by Deshpande.

Espousing the Benedictian model of nations as 'imagined', Deshpande is quick to discern that, because of very low literacy, the simultaneity of shared experiences by countless others, so necessary for developing the 'we' feeling of 'nation-ness', did not take place in the social construction of the Indian nation through 'print capitalism', as in the West. The Swadeshi movement spearheaded by Gandhi during the colonial phase, and the ideology of development through socialism, secularism and non-alignment in the Nehruvian era, provided the functional equivalents. The Indian nation got constructed as an 'imagined economy', with the producer for the nation, irrespective of her/his caste, creed, class, gender, religion or region, becoming its true patriot. Deshpande critiques the

Nehruvian era for its repression of non-secular identities, which in Nehru's time created a homogeneous privileged upper caste and a secular middle class, and later led to competitive desecularisation (Hindu, Muslim and other variety) of its 'secular space'

In his analysis of caste, it is not quite clear if Deshpande is counter-posing caste vis-à-vis the ethnic group. If this is so, his conceptual apparatus does not include the ethnicisation of caste, thus limiting the scope for the analysis of dalits and OBCs as ethnic identities of clusters of castes, in competition for power and scarce material and cultural resources. He makes a 'squint-eyed' contestable assertion that so long as the caste composition of the privileged class in society 'continues to reflect the dominance of the upper castes, it does not matter even if the *majority* of the members of these castes are themselves poor or disprivileged'. Nor is his formulation, that 'while caste remains a necessary precondition for making it into the privileged group, it is not in itself a sufficient condition to ensure entry', clear.

Analysing macro data on monthly per capita expenditure provided by the NSS 55th Round, as expected, Deshpande finds high concentration of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs) in the Below Poverty Level (BPL) class, combined with high concentration of the Hindu Upper Castes (HUC) in the 'non-poor' privileged class, in both rural and, and more so, in urban areas. The OBC pattern puzzles him: both in the rural and urban areas their concentration in the BPL class is the highest (higher than the SCs and STs), and second only to HUCs in the 'non-poor' class. Strangely enough, he dismisses them for the present as 'a residual, unexamined category that deserves more detailed attention'. Deshpande ignores the changes in the relational-institutional aspects of caste inequality over five decades.

Deshpande's class analysis concentrates on the enigmatic non-polar middle class, which finds unsatisfactory treatment in the bipolar framework of the classical Marxist model. He offers three definitions. The first, describes the middle class as 'the class that *articulates* the hegemony of the ruling bloc', the second describes it, more than any other, as the owners and controllers of cultural capital, while the third refers to it as a *differentiated* class, constituted of an ideology-producing 'elite' and an ideology-consuming 'mass' segment. The first and the third definitions can be suitably combined, while the second is confusing. Deshpande, like many others, ignores the association of the middle class with counter-hegemonic social and revolutionary movements that have brought about far-reaching transformations in history.

The observation that the Nehruvian era produced a more or less undifferentiated middle class is problematic. Equally, the generalisation that the middle class has totally abdicated from its ideology of development, and is moving away from the nation-state with the emergence of sub-national loyalties and the lure of transnational identities, is too sweeping. Deshpande is aware of the paradox that the nation 'continues to command the often fanatical loyalty of large numbers', even in the face of 'widespread erosion of national identities'. Without any credible alternative to the nation-state, it is adventurous to suggest the redundancy of the nation-state.

There is much that constraints of space do not permit me to review. I recommend that you read and find out.

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**Sumathi Ramaswamy** (ed.) *Beyond appearances? Visual practices and ideologies in modern India* (Contributions to Indian sociology - Occasional studies 10) New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, xxix + 412 pp., Rs 780 (hb) ISBN 0-7619-9756-3

This work is an excellent contribution to the development of a 'hermeneutic of the visible'. It fulfils what its editor, Sumathi Ramaswamy sets as its task: 'to interrogate the work of vision, paying attention to what a particular image might mean or intend for its producers and consumers', and 'to what it does to transform the world(s) it comes to inhabit and in which it circulates' (p. xv). The volume centres around the agency, publicity, reproducibility, interocularly, hybridity, and mobility of the modern Indian visual. To understand and interpret the 'appearance', the contributors analyse many artefacts and visual technologies of colonial and post colonial India.

Several articles dissect popular Indian visual field to locate how the nation of India has been invoked, defined and established in opposition to colonial forceful resistance and on the solid foundation of patriotic sensibility. C. Pinney shows that, by successfully negotiating the colonial zeal of indoctrination, the popular Indian indigenous visuality invoked the nation. In the latter half of 19th century, 'indigenisation' transformed colonial perspectivalism into 'xeno-real' – a strategic mimicry that pursues a new local agenda. A political situation charged by the

nationalist spirit paved way for the inter-ocular dialectics of different media to take up the Indian nation as the new local agenda, initially through allegory, and then through an embodied national figure. To bypass the wrath of colonial masters, this embodiment was carefully projected into a corporeal domain beyond the access of state sanctions. Srirupa Roy digs deep into the moving pictures of the post-colonial period and brings out the visual representations of India projected over there. She locates the continuity of the tradition of state intervention in the visual domain. She also analyses popular patriotic visions of India found in the recent music videos produced by non-state actors. These too equate the nation with the state though in a more symbolic, universalistic and enchanted way.

Some articles identify how various visual technologies, practices and ideologies arouse national feelings—a vital precondition for nation-building. Partha Mitter examines how mechanical reproduction, with its repeatability and accessibility, revolutionised artistic production and eventually contributed to the formation of modern identity in colonial India. The wide circulation of mechanical prints addressing politics in the religious language, reinforced by the introduction of fast and cheap modes of transport, like railways, ultimately created the 'imagined community', the nation, with a common visual culture. Similarly, Sumathi Ramaswamy shows how the somaticised map as 'a powerful emblem' arouses patriotic feelings among the modern citizens. She suggests that popular cartography entails two ways of seeing India as a geo-body—an affectively neutral visualisation of a bounded empty social space, and as *Bharat Mata*—an enchanted patriotic sensibility. The latter, the 'bodyscapes', implies a corporeal and close bonding with the national territory. The contemporary problems of Indian nationhood have also been reflected in various visual artefacts.

Patricia Uberoi treats calendar as visual representation of the secularist agenda of the 'Nehruvian' nation-building. She unfolds the tension between an egalitarian understanding of the principle of 'unity in diversity', in which all religions are conceived as equivalent sources of truth, and a 'majoritarian' hegemonic understanding, in which other religions are appropriated to a Hindu fold, as represented by 'Mother India'. How this hegemonic Hindu nationalism utilises new audiovisual technologies to mobilise and indoctrinate people is identified in Christiane Brosius's writing. She identifies two principles of audiovisual rhetoric of Hindu nationalism: the technique of 'intervisuality' utilising already familiar audiovisual images, and 'tickling' of the senses using 'wish-images',

through which imaginary ‘think-spaces’—for example, the idea of an imagined Hindu nation under threat—are created to arouse the audience sensually

Apart from dealing with the theme of the nation in different ocular media, this volume contains works probing the various visual artefacts to analyse their social implications. Kajri Jain locates the value and power of calendar or ‘bazaar art’ as a circulating object. For her, the calendar is the material embodiment of various social relationships like that between business associates or between the devotee and the image of God printed in the calendar. However, there are tensions between the role of images in the ethical frame of bazaar and aesthetic frame of ‘fine art’. She points out how close engagements typical of a devotional relationship with images have been belittled within an aesthetic schema which privileges distance.

Philip Lutgendorf locates the visual evolution of the ‘monkey-god’, Hanuman, across many media. He examines the 20th century image of this divine monkey as a hairless, humanised, stout hero. He explains the rise of this image in terms of (a) the contemporary trends of progressive homogenisation of popular visual icons in the era of mass reproduction and cheap prints, and (b) the body of discourses about the ‘scientific’ rationalisation and historicisation of Hindu mythology reflecting contemporary anxieties over the species-identity of Hanuman.

Woodman Taylor brings out the meanings generated for the audience by the film scenes of intense interpenetration of gazes between the lovers. Gaze implies physical interaction through vision. Taylor shows how it is embedded in two different South Asian notions of vision: *drishti*—typical of religious context and deployed in mythological films, and *nazar*—essential for expressing love in Persianate poetry and used in romantic films. The gaze and the preceding song with appropriate lyric, together produce ‘the poetics of sight’. Due to the connection between ocular and aural (for example, sounds of film music), the ‘inter-sensual’ Bollywood films constitute a subaltern modernity vis-à-vis an ocular-centric Western modernism.

Anne Hardgrove examines the production of visually spectacular ancestral houses by migrant communities in colonial times. These mansions announce and renew identity of these diasporic communities as sons of the soil. Their traditional religious mentality and their active participation in the modern colonial capitalist market explain the hybrid architecture and decoration of these houses. Its recent transformation into international tourist destinations converts the private space into a public

commodity for visual consumption in the global capitalist market. As memory-sites, these mansions help recreate diasporic identity formation.

Sandria B. Freitag points out how 'acts of seeing' have become 'acts of knowing' contributing towards the formation of civil society in independent India. Everyday acts of seeing and knowing enable persons to understand and eventually change their societies. She identifies the interplay between traditional and modern, on one hand, and between local and global, on the other. For her, modern South Asian civil society is 'open to all', allowing subject status for both the creators and the consumers.

This volume, with its interdisciplinary and qualitative approaches, contributes to the furtherance of visual studies. It will fascinate students of social sciences and aesthetics.

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**Vasant Moon** *Growing up untouchable in India: A dalit autobiography* (Translated from the Marathi by Gail Omvedt). New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 2002, xx + 203 pp., Rs. 250 (pb). ISBN 81-7829-156-8

The dalit literature, which led to a stormy wave of new forms of protest, first flourished in Maharashtra about two and a half decades ago. Now it has become a pan-Indian phenomenon growing as a crucial part of the dalit movement. What makes dalit literature unique is its inveighed style of expression. Whether it is a poem or a novel or a narration of one's life story, pain and anger are its essence which spontaneously overflows with bitter experiences of socio-cultural exclusion, socio-economic exploitation and general helplessness. Yet, in it a sense of pride of self-preservation is also retained with an invincible hope of winning over the crushing miseries.

Compared with some incisive dalit literary works, the book under review is not so trenchant in attacking the alleged enemies. The author, Vasant Moon, is highly conscious in presenting the memoirs of those vivid circumstances through which he makes the journey of an untouchable's life. Though sublime in his approach, Moon is very creative in seeking to reach out to present every bit of his life that influenced him as he was making up into a man.

This book, translated into English by Professor Gail Omvedt, was originally written in Marathi under the title *Vasti*. Eleanor Zelliot's

'Introduction' adds academic weight to it. Though succinct, each of the twenty-nine chapters made is nonpareil art carved out to expose to the reader not only how the dalit world was responding to the trends of change through which it was trying to emerge into its own, but also the complicated way in which Vidarbha as a region was coming to terms with these trends to give birth to a new society, polity and culture during the freedom struggle. Moon's narration of the day-to-day events of what he calls as his 'Vasti', the neighbourhood of Nagpur called Maharpura, in which he grew up, is fascinating. His description of 'Vasti', caught up in the currents of liberationist spirit, the vehement emotions of its people, their strong bonds and an expression of unshakeable faith in Babasaheb Ambedkar, is moving.

Furthermore, though suffering was a crucial part of their life, they conducted their collective and individual lives with utmost love and care for each other. The humour of social life springing from humiliating economic condition inspires one to learn how one can internalise abject poverty too, and still be human and valuable. Every character, even minor ones like Maniram, Shivram, Gangya and Sukhya, along with some important ones, figure in the live presentation of 'Vasti'. Entire Nagpur city looks like a cork sailing through the turbulent times of transformation in the sea of changes in and around itself, and elsewhere in Maharashtra. The Nagpur dalits seem to have played a decisive role in the movement of untouchables launched by Babasaheb Ambedkar. With that backdrop, Moon proves how he had made his life meaningful in linking with the life of the dalit community and dalit movement in Maharashtra. In the dalit world of Moon, hunger and humour, pride and humiliation, bravery and defeat, struggle and suffering all exist side by side along with the rays of hope of liberation. Indeed, Moon's book makes the story of his times full of life in it.

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**Yogesh Atal** *Indian sociology from where to where Footnotes to the history of the discipline* Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2003, 255 pp., Rs 450 (hb) ISBN 81-7033-760-7

By frequently turning their gaze on the growth and development of their discipline, sociologists in India have contributed much to the self-introspective spirit of Indian sociology. The book under review extends this



tradition while adding to the existing repertoire of disciplinary history. It deals with issues such as Asian and Pacific sociology, the sociology-anthropology interface, the call for indigenisation, village studies, policy uses of social sciences, and research priorities in anthropology and in education, apart from a couple of essays containing a generalist exposition on social transformation in India.

This book is, however, different from its generic predecessors in many respects. First, the essays assembled here span four decades (from 1961 to 2001, to be more precise), and all but two of them have been published before. Though the candid prefatory admission of differences in writing style and shifting emphases disarms the reviewer from commenting further, it does not forewarn the reader of the substantial overlaps across the essays.

Second, despite Atal's claim 'to follow the framework of sociology of social science rather than concentrate on mere chronology of events' (p 7), most of the essays fall short of this ideal. No doubt, some of them are highly informative and are animated by a comparative perspective to view social sciences. However, their inherent unevenness hinders them from offering a unified framework of 'sociology of Indian sociology'.

Last, and more important, the book seems to be addressed more to the author's contemporaries than to the young entrants to the discipline. Without quarrelling over Atal's autobiographical indulgence, one does not fail to notice the highly personalised nature of his instant enterprise. Young readers would take him to be the victim of the politics of the sociology profession in India. In fact, Atal feels compelled to make his writings available at one place 'for the future historian of the discipline' (p 9), as he has been left out of the profession owing to its politics of inclusion and exclusion. The Indian Sociological Society (ISS), and its official journal the *Sociological bulletin* (SB), are the principal targets of his attack, apart from few professionals for whom the present reviewer holds no brief. To be fair to Atal, he does not attempt to conceal his sense of disappointment: 'the essay on 'sociology and the future' never found a place in the *Sociological bulletin* however, it was published in the *International social science journal* and got translated into Spanish, French and Chinese'. He goes on to say, 'the two-three collection of essays relative to Indian sociology published at the time of the World Conference of Sociology, held in India, did not include any of my essays on Indian Sociology' (p 8). The last essay of the volume, which is also the latest, has this to say:

When I looked at the entries against my name, I was not surprised to find that only one of my books out of several that I authored or edited have been reviewed, and two of my articles and two reviews done by me have been published, in my long career until 1999 I have refereed only one article. From this angle, one can easily find the core group that monopolised the *Sociological bulletin* and the ISS notwithstanding some exceptions. It was perhaps the growing resentment against such a monopoly that the recent elections to the society snatched away all key positions from Delhi (p. 245).

This extensive quotation is not meant to look into the veracity or otherwise of the author's perception of the profession, but merely to indicate the tone and tenor of the current volume. Also, this should not digress us from a set of insightful and pertinent comments about the practitioners of the discipline contained in the essays in the volume. Atal is at his perceptive best as far as the failure of the profession to come to terms with the switch-over in the medium of instruction in higher education is concerned. No one can dispute his diagnosis of the present malady afflicting the discipline. The dearth of proper teaching material and the lack of competent teachers in regional languages are definitely linked to the failure of the profession to take anticipatory steps in time.

Furthermore, his advocacy of proficiency in another regional language on the part of researchers is remarkable. His encouragement of cross-cultural research and the plea for making the training in language an in-built component of the sociology syllabus are far-sighted. Such emphases on regional languages and cultures other than one's own would not only automatically force a student to visit other cultural regions for fieldwork and thereby learn the language, but also yield concrete advantages to the researcher by way of comparative orientation and better employability.

Atal distinguishes himself from other historians of the discipline by focusing more on how the discipline became insulated in its next phase of consolidation and the gaining of an independent identity within the academia. While other writers are more concerned with how sociology arrived on the Indian scene and what problems Indian sociology had to encounter before it attained a secure and autonomous existence, Atal's professionalism makes him highlight the adverse consequences of sociology departments becoming 'endogamous' or their 'valuing ascribed status of 'department product' and virtually closing the door for those born elsewhere'. The readers will agree with him on his assessment of 'insiderism' and its dangers. 'there is not only a tendency to quote the foreigners, but to deliberately ignore the works of Indian peers, and

particularly the juniors especially when they are not the “insiders” (p 246)

Taken in its entirety, however, contrary to Atal’s claim, the book fails to take the debate ‘from the platform of academic politics to the arena of the sociology of knowledge’ (p 239)

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## **INDIAN SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

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### **The Professor M.N. Srinivas Memorial Prize 2004**

The Indian Sociological Society and the Indian Council of Social Science Research have jointly set up The Professor M N Srinivas Endowment Fund. The Fund has instituted a prize for young sociologists/social anthropologists for publishing the best sociological/social anthropological paper, in English, in any of the social science journals or edited volumes published in India. The prize will carry a certificate and a cash award of Rs 2,000.

Papers published between 01 January 2001 and 31 December 2003 are eligible for consideration. The author must be 40 years or less in age as on 31 December 2003. If the paper is co-authored, the authors must be 40 years or less in age as on 31 December 2003. A reprint of the paper along with photocopies of the title page of the journal or the edited volume and proof of age must reach the Office of the Indian Sociological Society on or before 31 August 2004. Typescripts/manuscripts/computer print-outs will not be accepted. Scholars, other than the authors, are also welcome to bring to the notice of the selection committee suitable papers for consideration.

## Books Received (January–December 2003)

- Adams, Bert N and R A Sydie 2002 *Sociological theory* New Delhi Vistaar Publications
- Ahmed, Akbar S 2003 *Islam under siege Living dangerously in a post-honor world* New Delhi Vistaar Publications
- Atal, Yogesh 2003 *Indian sociology from where to where Footnotes to the history of the discipline* Jaipur Rawat Publications
- Banerjee, Anurban 2003 *Students and radical social change* Burdwan (West Bengal) The University of Burdwan
- Berry, John W, R C Mishra and R C Tripathi (eds) 2003 *Psychology in human and social development Lessons from diverse cultures (A Festschrift for Durganand Sinha)* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Bhosale, B V 2003 *Charmakars in transition* Mumbai Nurali Prakashan Company
- Butcher, Melissa 2003 *Transnational television, cultural identity and change When STAR came to India* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Chakraborty, Krishna 2002 *Family in India* Jaipur Rawat Publications
- Chaudhuri, Matrayee (ed) 2003 *The practice of sociology* New Delhi Orient Longman
- Crowell, Daniel W 2003 *The SEWA movement and rural development The Banaskantha and Kutch experience* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Das, N K (ed) 2003 *Culture, religion and philosophy Critical studies in syncretism and inter-faith harmony* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications
- Delamont, Sara 2003 *Feminist sociology* London Sage Publications
- Deshpande, Satish 2003 *Contemporary India A sociological view* New Delhi Viking/Penguin Books
- Dube, S C 2004 *The Kamar* (new edition) New Delhi Oxford University Press
- Gane, Mike 2003 *French social theory* London Sage Publications
- Ghosh, Bhola Nath 2002 *Rural women leadership* New Delhi Mohit Publications
- Gill, M S (ed) 2003 *Punjab society Perspectives and challenges* New Delhi Concept Publishing Company
- Gore, M S 2003 *Social development Challenges faced in an unequal and plural society* Jaipur Rawat Publications
- Haase-Dubosc, Danielle, Mary E John, Marcelle Marini, Rama Melkote, and Susie Tharu (eds) (translated under the direction of Nirupama Rastogi) 2003 *French feminism An Indian anthology* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Hans, Asha and Annie Patri (eds) 2003 *Women, disability and identity* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Harish, Ranjana and V Bharathi Harishankar (eds) 2003 *Shakti Multidisciplinary perspectives on women's empowerment in India* Jaipur Rawat Publications
- Hughes, John A, Wes W Sharrock and Peter J Martin 2003 *Understanding classical sociology Marx, Weber, Durkheim* (2nd edition) London Sage Publications
- Jamous, Raymond 2003 *Kinship and rituals among the Meo of northern India Locating sibling relationship* (Translated from the French by Nora Scott) (French Studies in South Asian Culture and Studies) New Delhi Oxford University Press

- Jogdand, P G and S M Michael (eds ) 2003 *Globalization and social movements Struggle for a humane society* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications
- Joshi, P C 2002 *Marxism and social revolution in India and other essays* (Revised and enlarged edition) New Delhi Manak Publications
- Kelkar, Govind, Dev Nathan and Pierre Walter (eds ) 2003 *Gender relations in forest societies in Asia* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Kolenda, Pauline 2003 *Caste, marriage and inequality Studies from North and South India* Jaipur Rawat Publications
- Kumar, Vivek 2002 *Dalit leadership in India* Delhi Kalpaz Publications
- Lal, A K (ed ) 2003 *Social exclusion Essays in honour of Dr Bindeshwar Pathak* (2 Volumes) New Delhi Concept Publishing Company
- Lecomte-Tilouine, Marie and Pascale Dollfus (eds ) 2003 *Ethnic revival and religious turmoil Identities and representations in the Himalayas* New Delhi Oxford University Press
- Madan, G R 2002 *Indian rural problems* New Delhi Radha Publications
- Madan, G R and V P Gupta (eds ) 2000 *Integral sociology An anthology of the writings of Radha Kamal Mukerjee* (Vol 1 - Basic social forms, Vol 2 - Theory of social systems, Vol 3 - Unification of sociological theory, Vol 4 - Personality, community and civilization) New Delhi Radha Publications
- Mahajan, Gurpreet (in collaboration with Helmut Reifeld) (ed ) 2003 *The Public and the private Issues of democratic citizenship* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Menon, Visalakshi 2003 *From movement to government the Congress in the United Provinces, 1937-42* (Sage Series in Modern Indian History - IV) New Delhi Sage Publications
- Mirchandani, Dmaz 2003 *Educational theories, policies and reforms in India Graduates in perspective* Delhi Publication Division, University of Delhi
- Murickan, Jose, M K George, K A Emmanuel, Jose Boban, and Prakash Pillai R 2003 *Development-induced displacement Case of Kerala* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications
- Namishray, Mohan Dass 2003 *Caste and race Comparative study of BR Ambedkar and Martin Luther King* Jaipur Rawat Publications
- Nanda, J N 2003 *Religion and philosophy for modern youth* New Delhi Concept Publishing Company
- Omvedt, Gail 2003 *Buddhism in India Challenging Brahmanism and caste* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Pernau, Margnt, Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld (eds ) 2003 *Family and gender Changing values in Germany and India* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Platt, Jennifer 2002 *Fifty years of the International Social Science Council* Paris International Social Science Council
- Possehl, Gregory L 2003 *The Indus civilization A contemporary perspective* New Delhi Vistaar Publications
- Punalekar, Sanjiv 2003 *Dream of a Marathi fundamentalist* Mumbai 'Civil Liberties' Publications
- Purohit, B S and Sandeep Joshi (eds ) 2003 *Social justice in India* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications
- Ramaswamy, Sumathi (ed ) 2003 *Beyond appearances? Visual practices and ideologies in modern India* (Contributions to Indian sociology - Occasional Studies 10) New Delhi Sage Publications

- Rao, Y Ravindranath 2003 *Tribal tradition and change A study of Kudubis of south India* Mangalore Mangala Publications
- Rege, Sharmila (ed ) 2003 *Sociology of gender The challenge of feminist sociological knowledge* (Themes in Indian Sociology - Volume 1) New Delhi Sage Publications
- Robinson, Rowena 2003 *Christians of India* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Robinson, Rowena and Sathianathan Clarke (eds ) 2003 *Religious conversion in India Modes, motivations, and meanings* New Delhi Oxford University Press
- Samaddar, Ranabir (ed ) 2003 *Refugees and the state Practices of asylum and care in India, 1947-2000* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Sandhu, Ranvinder Singh (ed ) 2003 *Urbanization in India Sociological contributions* (Themes in Indian Sociology - Volume 2) New Delhi Sage Publications
- Sarangapani, Padma M 2003 *Constructing school knowledge An ethnography of learning in an Indian village* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Saraswathi, T S (ed ) 2003 *Cross-cultural perspectives in human development Theory, research and applications* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Savur, Manorama 2003 *And the bamboo flowers in the Indian forests What did the pulp and paper industry do?* (Two-volume set) Delhi Manohar Publishers and Distributors
- Searle-Chatterjee, Mary and Ursula Sharma (eds ) 2003 *Contextualising caste Post-Dumontian approaches* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications
- Sen, Padmaja (ed ) 2003 *Changing tribal life A socio-philosophical perspective* New Delhi Concept Publishing Company
- Sen, Ragini 2003 *We the billion A social psychological perspective on India's population* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Sharma, Dimesh (ed ) 2003 *Childhood, family, and sociocultural change in India Reinterpreting the inner world* (with a Foreword by Uwe P. Giele) New Delhi Oxford University Press
- Sharma, Mukul (ed ) 2003 *Improving people's lives Lessons in empowerment from Asia* New Delhi Sage Publications in association with The Commonwealth Foundation, London
- Sharrock, Wes W, John A. Hughes and Peter J. Martin 2003 *Understanding modern sociology* London Sage Publications
- Srinivas, M N 2003 *Religion and society among the Coorgs of south India* (with an Introduction by Andre Beteille) New Delhi Oxford University Press
- Sujatha, V 2003 *Health by the people Sociology of medical lore* Jaipur Rawat Publications
- Tandon, Rajesh and Ranyita Mohanty (eds ) 2003 *Does civil society matter? Governance in contemporary India* New Delhi Sage Publications
- van Ufford, Philip Quarles and Ananta Kumar Giri (eds ) 2003 *A moral critique of development In search of global responsibilities* London and New York Routledge
- Varma, Sushma J and Radhika Seshan (eds ) 2003 *Fractured identity The Indian diaspora in Canada* Jaipur Rawat Publications

## INDIAN SOCIOLOGICAL SOCIETY

### Secretary's Report (2003)

Friends, it gives me immense pleasure to present before you the Secretary's Report for the period January-December 2003. I wish to place on record my deep sense of gratitude to all the members for their constant encouragement and support during this period, and I look forward to receiving similar cooperation in future, too. In all modesty, I would say that our team of office bearers and members of the Managing Committee (MC) has done its best to serve the Indian Sociological Society (ISS) and to safeguard its long-term interests. I do not, however, claim that all our activities were without shortcomings. I crave for your forgiveness for any lapse and/or deficiency in carrying out my duties.

Before reporting the main events of the year, on behalf of the General Body (GB) and the MC, I would like to sincerely thank Professor A K Singh, Vice-Chancellor, M L Sukhadia University, Professor R P Singh, Vice-Chancellor, Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, and Professor Brij Raj Chauhan, former President of the ISS for inviting the Society to hold its XXIX All India Sociological Conference (AISC) at the Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology, Udaipur on 21-23 December 2003. Our special thanks are also due to Dr T M Dak, Director, Institute of Social Development, Udaipur and the Organising Secretary of the XXIX AISC and his colleagues who have spared no effort in making the arrangements for the academic sessions as well as the comfortable stay of the delegates. They have worked for the past several months, planned each detail and sought cooperation and support from everyone to ensure that the XXIX AISC would be a grand success.

The theme of the Conference—'Social Policy, Governance and Mobilisation'—has contemporary relevance. In three symposia, sub-themes like 'Issues on Governance', 'Tribal Situation in India: The 73rd Amendment and After', 'Rural Development in India: Challenges for the 21st Century' have been discussed in great detail by invited scholars. The theme for the fourth symposium—'Historical and Cultural Specificity of Rajasthan'—was selected to highlight the changing profile of society and institutions in Rajasthan. This symposium had special significance as the Society was organising the AISC in Rajasthan for the first time since 1951 when the Society was founded. We are grateful to all the chairpersons and speakers of the four symposia for accepting our invitation and making their valuable presentations.

### **The M.N. Srinivas Memorial Lecture and Prize for Young Sociologists**

You may recall that The M N Srinivas Memorial Lecture Series was instituted by the Society in 2001. This was made possible by The Professor M N Srinivas Endowment Fund set up by the Society out of the contributions received from a group of former students of Professor Srinivas who bequeathed the entire royalties of their edited volumes (published in honour of Professor Srinivas) to the Society and a matching grant given by the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). The First Lecture in the Series was delivered by Professor André Béteille on 'Hierarchical and Competitive Inequality' at the AISC held at the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar in December 2001. This lecture has since been published in *Sociological bulletin* (Vol 51, No 1, March 2002 3-27).

Professor P C Joshi, a past President of the Society, had kindly accepted to deliver the Second Lecture in the Series. Since he was abroad from July to December 2002, he could not deliver the Lecture during the XXVIII AISC in Kanpur. He delivered the Lecture on 'Between Vision and Reality: Reflections on Hindi Region' in the Department of Sociology, University of Delhi on 14 November 2003. Professor A M Shah presided over the function, Professor Jacob John Kattakayam welcomed the guests, and Professor Tulsi Patel proposed the vote of thanks.

As you all know, The Professor M N Srinivas Endowment Fund has also enabled the Society to institute The M N Srinivas Memorial Prize consisting of a cash prize of Rs 1,000 and a certificate. It is awarded every year to a young sociologist/social anthropologist for publishing the best paper in sociology/social anthropology in any of the social science journals or edited volumes in English in India. The Advisory Committee of the Endowment Fund acts as the selection/evaluation committee. In 2001 the prize was awarded to Dr Rowena Robinson of the Indian Institute of Technology (Bombay), Mumbai, and in 2002 it was awarded to Dr Nandini Sundar of the Centre for the Study of Law and Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

I am happy to inform you that The Professor M N Srinivas Endowment Committee has decided to increase the prize money from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000 from 2003 onwards. However, during 2003, though ten entries were received for the Prize, none of them measured up to the standards expected by the Committee. Regrettably, I have to report that this year the Prize has not been awarded to any of the entries received.

### ***ISS Newsletter***

During the year under report two issues of the *ISS Newsletter* were published. Besides the regular news and information about the profession, the June issue contained the details of the XXIX AISC, Research Committees (RCs) and their Convenors and the Conference Registration Form. The December issue included the Conference details, besides the regular features. The feedback received



from different members suggests that this has facilitated the participation of members both in the Conference and in the RCs, as all relevant information had reached them well in advance

I take the opportunity to renew my appeal to all members of the Society to canvass advertisements for the *Newsletter* which will help us ease the financial burden on the Society substantially

### Research Committees

If the impetus given to research is an indicator of positive growth, then ISS has every reason to be proud of the research activities of its members. The constitution of RCs by itself does not indicate academic advancement. Initially the RCs appeared to be working at a snail's pace, but they have now gained momentum. It gives me a great sense of satisfaction to note that most of the RCs have so far performed well and, with growing involvement of members in their activities, the RCs are looking forward not only to consolidate their activities but also to undertake fresh initiatives. The Convenors of all the RCs deserve to be applauded for their impressive and reassuring performance.

### *Sociological Bulletin*

We are happy to announce that the MC has taken the much awaited decision to increase the periodicity of the *Sociological bulletin* from the existing two issues per volume to three issues per volume from Volume 53 (2004) onwards. The sequence of the issues will be as follows: Issue No. 1 January-April, Issue No. 2 May-August, and Issue No. 3 September-December.

The effort of Professor N. Jayaram, Managing Editor of the *Sociological bulletin* deserves special mention. He takes keen interest in improving the quality of the journal and in bringing it out on time.

Members would be delighted to hear that the ICSSR has sanctioned a sum of Rupees one lakh as its contribution to the Endowment Fund for the *Sociological bulletin*. The amount has been received by the Society. As per the ICSSR's conditions, the President of ISS will constitute an Advisory Committee to monitor the Endowment Fund and a nominee of ICSSR will be invited as its member.

### ISS Website

The long-awaited ISS Website ([www.insoso.org](http://www.insoso.org)) was launched on 1 August 2003. The site had attracted 2,351 visits in the first month itself. Steps have been taken to incorporate the suggestions received from members. The addresses of all Life Members are available on the site. Members are requested to send their E-mail Ids, telephone numbers, and brief write-ups (not more than 100 words) about their academic achievements and interests for display on the Website.

### **Shifting of the Society Office**

Acting on the letter from the Director, Institute of Social Sciences, to the President, ISS asking the Society to vacate the Institute's premises and to make alternative arrangements, a meeting of the past (since 1987) office bearers was held on 29 May 2003. It was decided that the MC be requested to constitute a subcommittee with at least three past Presidents/Secretaries and the present office bearers to negotiate terms of agreement with the Institute of Social Sciences, to clear misunderstanding, if any, and to remove communication gaps between the office bearers of the Society and the Institute, and to strengthen the existing interim arrangements.

Accordingly, at its meeting held on 30 May 2003, the MC constituted a subcommittee consisting of the following members: Professor Yogendra Singh, Professor P C Joshi, Professor Partha Nath Mukherji, and the incumbent office bearers of the Society. The subcommittee met Dr George Mathew, Director of the Institute on 27 July 2003 to discuss the issues raised by him. The meeting resolved to continue the functioning of the Society's office in the Institute of Social Sciences until a permanent national office for the Society is set up. It is high time that the Society thinks about having a permanent national office of its own. I request the wholehearted cooperation of all the members for achieving this aim.

### **Postal Charges**

The GB meeting held on 19 December 2002 in Kanpur, decided that the *Sociological bulletin* would be sent to only those who make a one time payment of Rs 1,000 to meet postal expenses and others should collect their copies from the Society's office. It was also decided that those who became Life Members on payment of Rs 2,500 be exempted from this additional payment. However, we had to withhold the implementation of this decision due to the express resentment from some members, who had even hinted a legal action against the office bearers. This compelled us to mail the *Bulletin* to all eligible members without insisting the payment of Rs 1,000. It must be mentioned here that we have received Rs 1,000 each from thirty-eight members as contribution towards Sociological Bulletin Fund. I expect that other members will follow suit.

### **Golden Jubilee Volumes**

As reported earlier, seven proposals submitted by our colleagues were selected to compile volumes on various themes. Some senior colleagues were requested to be academic advisors to the editors in their respective fields. The editors and the academic advisors collectively selected ten to fifteen articles from the past issues of the *Sociological bulletin* and each editor has written a comprehensive introduction to the respective volume. A 'Series Note' by Professor B S

Baviskar is also included in all the volumes. SAGE Publications India Private Limited is publishing these volumes.

I am happy to report that, of the above, the SAGE has brought out the first three volumes *Sociology of Gender*, *Urbanisation in India*, and *Sociology of Religion in India*, and the same have been released at the auspicious hands of the Vice-President of India, Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat during the inaugural function of the XXIX AISC at Udaipur on 21 December 2003. The work on the remaining four volumes is progressing well.

I thank Professor B S Baviskar for pursuing the project on the Golden Jubilee volumes and for his valuable suggestions in running the Society's affairs from time to time.

### **Regional Associations**

Although several regional sociological associations are functioning in different parts of the country, only seven are affiliated with the ISS. Of these, only four associations have renewed their affiliation. I request the office bearers of all the regional associations to affiliate their associations with the ISS.

### **Elections - 2003**

As (under article 4 [1] of the Constitution of the ISS) the term of office bearers and five MC members was expiring, elections were held to these posts. The President had nominated Professor Mohini Anjum of the Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi as the Election Officer. The following have been elected as the office bearers and MC members:

<i>President</i>	Professor Partha Nath Mukherji, Gurgaon
<i>Secretary</i>	Professor Jacob John Kattakayam, Thiruvananthapuram
<i>Members</i>	Professors U B Bhoite, Pune, Sharit K Bhowmik, Mumbai, D Jayalakshmi, Chennai, Ravinder Kaur, New Delhi, and Vijayalakshmi Reddy, Hyderabad

I welcome the newly elected office officers and MC members.

### **In General**

Friends, the Society continues to be under financial strain due to mounting maintenance, printing and mailing costs. Enlisting new life members and subscribers to the *Bulletin* is the need of the hour. Even under these financial constraints, it has been decided to increase the number of annual issues of the *Bulletin* from two to three. This will naturally result in an additional expenditure of Rupees one lakh per year. We must mobilise additional resources to meet this additional expenditure.

Although as a part of marketing the *Bulletin* we have printed a subscription form and sent to various universities and research institutions, the response has not been very encouraging. I feel that with personal and concerted follow-up at the level of universities, post-graduate departments, affiliated colleges and research institutes it is possible to register more paid subscribers. I would, therefore, appeal to all members to make special efforts to increase the number of subscribers to the *Bulletin*. Apart from being a financial strategy and a balancing act, such an attempt to popularise and enlarge the circulation of the *Bulletin* will improve the visibility for our professional output.

After the last GB meeting held on 19 December 2002 at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, sixty Life Members and thirty-eight Ordinary/Student Members have joined the Society.

Friends, since we last met in December 2003 in Kanpur, we have lost a distinguished Life Member Professor A K Saran (Lucknow). We mourn his death, pay our respects to the departed soul and convey our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

I would like to place on record my sincere gratitude to Professor D N Dhanagare, President of the Society. He is a man of great virtues and sincere commitment to values. He stimulated everyone with his deep sense of devotion and dedication in developing the ISS. At every stage of my association with him, his constant encouragement and wholehearted support has been a source of great inspiration. I also thank Professor Harish Doshi, Treasurer and MC members for their cooperation and support.

Before I close, I wish to record my gratitude to Dr George Mathew, Director of the Institute of Social Sciences, for the help and support in running the office of the Society. I also thank Mr Krishnan Namboodiri, Office Secretary, Mr Madhu Nair, Shri S S Arumugam, Ms Vidya, Mr Amrendra Kumar and other staff of the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi for their valuable help and support in running the Society's office smoothly and efficiently.

**Jacob John Kattakayam**  
Secretary



# **SOCIOLOGICAL BULLETIN**

## *Journal of the Indian Sociological Society*

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***Editorial Note:***

As a convention, *Sociological Bulletin* publishes articles and book reviews strictly in the chronological order in which they are received in their accepted version by the Editorial Office. The instant issue carries articles and book reviews received up to 27 February 2004 and 05 April 2004 respectively.

***Managing Editor***

# **The Field of Labour**

***N.R. Sheth***

Thank you, M N Srinivas Endowment Committee, for asking me to deliver the third memorial lecture. Thank you, Indian Sociological Society, for organising the lecture as a part of the conference programme. You have honoured me with a prized opportunity to pay tribute to my teacher and mentor in more senses than one. I was among Professor Srinivas's inaugural students at Baroda. Having him as a teacher was a rare gift of providence. His concern for us extended well beyond the academic regime to cover our physical, social and human well-being. His notes on our assignments carried not only subject insights but also lasting lessons in communication. We witnessed his struggles and achievements as he tried to get recognition for sociology and the fieldwork method in academic establishment, public affairs and governance. His uncanny wit and wryly potent humour often made waves of delightful unintended learning.

Srinivas's intellectual interest during the later part of his life and career was characterised by a growing concern about human implications of social change in India and the global society. He was optimistic about integration among unequal caste ranks by way of emergence of an expansive middle class. However, he was concerned about the escalating force of selfishness, greed, consumerism and violence in society at large. He was perturbed about the growing failure of the conventional modes of socioeconomic development to contain the destructive forces. He continued to look for culturally meaningful measures to fight this disease. His prescription included the possibility of the humanist element in Indian spirituality and religious faith being invoked as an antidote to extravagant consumerism and individualism. This is indeed a far cry from the structure-function paradigm which Srinivas is widely believed to have followed relentlessly.

## **Changing Outlook**

I intend in this presentation to scan some landmarks and directions in the area of labour from a sociological vantage point. I was easily persuaded by Srinivas to explore, for my doctoral work, the web of social relations and institutions in an urban-industrial population. I settled down to the



study of a single factory. My initial perspective was guided by the structure-function paradigm and the degree of persistence of Indian tradition in its fusion with modern technology and ideas. The product of my research deviated only mildly from this perspective. Such an outcome would not have surprised sociologists of my generation. However, scholarship in studies of labour and industry has moved way beyond structure, function and tradition. This movement is in tune with changing theoretical outlook in the social sciences. Today, our sociological imagination is not constrained by organic models of states of existence and change. Today, our examination and assessment of specific groups, categories, classes and societies are not necessarily informed by models of rationality and modernity that once appeared to demand universal endorsement from analysts of social change and development. There is a sense in which this departure in our scientific outlook is related to recent upheavals in society.

The current capabilities and future prospects of modern science and technology have launched us on an apparently endless path of material progress and access to commodities and facilities. This path leads us into a vicious circle of arousal and fulfilment of personal and social needs. We are invited to live with the hope of a progressively happier and more prosperous world. This is our perfumed garden of economic and social development. The constantly visible availability of newer and smarter goods and services at all levels of social hierarchy is not a small invitation to desire, hope and euphoria.

Alas. We cannot overlook the flip side of this enchanting scenario. The visible availability of coveted goods and services is truly globalised, thanks to the omnipotent penetration of craft of publicity through media of instant communication. However, our ability to get what we crave continues to be unequal. Disparities of wealth and income between the rich and the poor have been growing everywhere. Many of us cannot afford to enjoy the new products of civilisation. Inaccessibility to objects of our desire produces a sense of deprivation in our social consciousness. Deprivation in an environment of continuous exposure to goods enhances the urge to possess. This drives us into an ideology of greed, temptation, acquisitiveness and individualism. Ethical and moral codes of conduct have been losing their value for us. We show increasing insensitivity to the needs and sensibilities of fellow human beings. Our institutions, from family to state, are going through turbulence of all sorts. Thus, our material progress and the bright prospects it presents for human happiness do not appear to be matched by human capabilities and tendencies necessary for a symbiotic global social order. It may be

worthwhile here to remember that a similar mismatch between industrial civilisation and contemporary human and social reality was underscored at the beginning of the twentieth century by western social scientists<sup>1</sup> We have probably been running fast to stay where we stand!

In this background, we should welcome the growing liberalisation in social science from the old tenets of objectivity and structuralism The new sociological imagination warrants acceptance of social conditions described by terms such as equality, freedom, justice, dignity, participation and empowerment to serve as benchmarks for comprehension and interpretation of social reality The concept of human development has lately been offered as a holistic articulator of the social order of our global dream Distinguished scholars like Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen have moulded the concept of human development with ideas of enrichment of human life and human freedom to choose a way of life<sup>2</sup> Human development is generally discussed in terms of the socio-economic conditions of the poor and disadvantaged sections of a population Poverty implies denial of choice Those who are denied choice deserve special attention in development discourse This aspect of development can be covered under the title quality of life But it is perhaps necessary to add a new dimension to the concept of human development from the vantage point of the rich and the powerful for whom the material quality of life is not an issue of social deprivation For people in this class, ideas of human freedom, dignity, equity and empowerment may provide ground for arrogance of excessive individuality and power at the cost of fellow human beings None of us can be unaware of how often people in high places invoke ideas of freedom and justice to claim exemption from legal or social accountability Human development, in this context, should mean regulation of social conduct to check abuse of social standing This can perhaps be called the social character aspect of human development Our sociological imagination deserves a composite frame for a comprehensive view of human development

### **Labour and Society**

This new direction of goal in social science has brought us a full circle from Marxian sociology of labour<sup>3</sup> Karl Marx saw society as neatly divided into two classes He wanted to liberate human spirit and labour power from the coercive superimposition of the capitalist class He wanted the wielder of labour to achieve control over nature and society for meaningful social existence His historical wisdom compelled him to

project the future of the contemporary class-ridden world from his perceived scenario of exploitation and expropriation of labour power. He envisioned social transformation through the stages of class conflict, working-class revolution, reign of the proletariat and, finally, a classless social order where human freedom and supremacy of labour power would become a reality. Marxian hopes and projections have been deconstructed and reconstructed a million times. However, an important unfinished agenda of social development is to recognise human labour as the principal stakeholder in economic enterprises.

Visionaries of the ilk of Marx and Max Weber had ruled out societies such as India in their diagnosis and prognosis of the Industrial Revolution and its consequences. Their knowledge and understanding of non-western societies should have made them wonder how India's baggage of primitive village communities and irrational religious culture could ever raise the capital-proletariat combination and confrontation so indispensable for the modernity of the machine age. Today we know how the *gurus* were wrong in this part of their vision. Machines and *moolah* sooner or later embraced virtually all societies around the world and created local cocktails of capital, labour, market and class relations. Local socioeconomic conditions had a lot to do with the form of evolution and progress of labour in each culture. However, this process has borne two common characteristics: (i) conditions of labour in terms of human development have remained sub-optimal, and (ii) there have been continuing efforts in some form or other to alter these conditions towards a higher degree or quality of human development. It is, therefore, possible to visualise the process of industrialisation as an engine for a concurrent process of human development or humanisation in the field of labour.

I should digress here for a moment. The field of labour for social science should ideally be coterminous with all types of work that involve construction and continuity of socioeconomic interdependence. Presidents and policemen, ministers and mafia agents, bonded workers, wives, children and all others who work for living are members of a labour force. Conventionally, however, labour has been defined within the contours of what economists recognise as labour market. This leaves out some socially significant categories of labour. The value of the labour of a spouse or child of a householder is full of economic riddles. The socioeconomic significance of a mighty labour market of drug peddlers, bootleggers, contract killers, etc. remains in our area of darkness. Our social historians seem to be cool about the labour dimension of our ancient and medieval social fabric. We need to know the way massive

labour forces were recruited and sustained to meet large constructions and craft enterprises. Who knows, we may discover streaks of human development in labour relations in pre-industrial times. For now, I would like to present my reflections along the conventional categorisation of labour into the organised and the unorganised sectors.

### **Organised Sector**

The modern process of progressive humanisation began at the dawn of industrialisation in the West (see Webb and Webb 1897). It involved radical changes at various levels in society. The socioeconomic reality of labour conditions in industry and in community was documented by sensitive scholars. Stark pictures of poverty, deprivation and exploitation served to raise public concern. The collective consciousness of suffering and exploitation among workers and rising public awareness of the plight of labour forced governments to assume responsibility for the welfare of and justice for employees. Trade unions were recognised to enable labour to promote its interests. Bilateral negotiations and bargaining were institutionalised to provide order and stability in employment relations. Laws were made to impose economic and managerial obligations on employers in the interest of equity, justice, human rights and social welfare for labour. In short, capital-labour relations were structured in the image of the democratic framework of the society at large.

The development of industrial labour force in India has gone through similar signposts of humanisation since its inception in the nineteenth century (see Sharma 1962, Punekar and Varickayil 1989). Industrial proletariat was mainly drawn from pauperised rural population, they suffered poverty and alienation in urban slums. Liberalised middle-class social reformers pressured the government to study conditions of labour and then to impose legal obligations on employers to improve those conditions. This was followed by the rise of trade unions in the wake of working-class consciousness and the nationalist movement. The initial connection of trade unionism with nationalist politics has left a lasting legacy of fission and fusion in the union movement to follow episodes of unity and division among political overlords. In addition, employment relations in India have been closely monitored and controlled by government by legal authority and political power. Hence, the overall effectiveness of trade unions in achieving justice and equity for labour has been modest and uneven. The role of unions in serving the cause of

human development of labour has depended on their political equations with people and groups in power

Meanwhile, questions were raised about low productivity of labour in societies like India. British social scientists and administrators easily concluded that attachment of Indian workers to primordial institutions (like family, caste, village, and religion) prevented development of adequate commitment to industrial jobs and way of life. Such lack of commitment was, in fact, projected as a major hurdle in industrialisation and economic development. However, grounded historical and sociological studies soon revealed that workers' loyalty to primordial institutions was not necessarily or even primarily responsible for lack of commitment to industry. The problem of commitment was seeded more in the behaviour of employers in terms of employment conditions and quality of life. We now have a good deal of research-based information to say that a worker's social behaviour and attitudes are based on choices he/she draws from the multiplicity of social, economic and political forces governing his/her life (see Holmstrom 1976, Uma Ramaswamy 1983). This kind of awareness brings us closer to the view of labour as an important partner in industry.

### **Modes of Humanisation**

The status of labour as stakeholder in industry steadily gained acceptance after independence under the influence of our democratic-socialistic polity and commitment to modern industrialism (see National Commission on Labour 1969). With the growth of unions in blue-collar as well as white-collar segments of workers, employers and the government yielded concessions in economic returns, working conditions, welfare and fairness and justice in labour relations. Public sector enterprises promoted the role of government as a model employer, which meant liberal and often indiscriminate commitment for creation of jobs and welfare measures for employees and their families. Affluent and liberal employers and union militancy from time to time led to better economic and social deals for employees. Some segments of workers, especially those in government and the public sector, could clinch relatively larger gains and prerogatives with their union power. They invited in the public eye the caricature of a labour aristocracy.

These forces of humanisation of industrial labour have been supplemented here and there by efforts to introduce democratic patterns of management in labour relations at the workplace. These efforts are guided by the human relations school in management science which

emphasises the value of a person's psychological, social and economic needs and obligations as a vital factor in his behaviour and performance as an employee. Various types of experiments have been made in industry to develop institutions of consultative and participative management in the areas of employee welfare, motivation, efficiency and productivity. Successive attempts have been made at national, state and industry levels to raise employee satisfaction, labour-management harmony, quality and productivity through joint managerial committees and quality circles. There have been attempts to redesign the content and rhythm of production process to make work more interesting and socially rewarding for employees. Stray attempts have also been made to promote labour participation in management and equity on the basis of Gandhian ideas of trusteeship. These democratic-humanistic experiments have largely proved short lived and remained confined to selected enterprises. However, they seem to have generated public awareness and interest in the human side of enterprise.

### **Liberalisation and Labour**

Labour relations began to face phases of turbulence about two decades ago with the rise of global competitiveness, economic crisis and the impact of information technology (see E A Ramaswamy 1988, Sheth 1996). Employers were pushed to the wall to cut costs under threats of healthy survival. Technology created compulsions to project labour as a dispensable factor. Trade unions lost their leverage to stand up and defend their constituents. Government faced its own compulsions to adopt a soft approach to the problems of industry and compromise its long-standing policies of equity and fairness on employment-related matters such as closure, retrenchment and casualisation of the workforce. Helplessness of trade unions made union leadership powerless and alienated workers from union bonds. A view increasingly shared by workers, employers and popular opinion was that unions had outlived their value for workers and society, they should modify their roles or exit.

At the same time, the process of humanisation of labour at the workplace has continued and assumed new forms (E Ramaswamy 1997). A new set of ideas and functions in the management of people has evolved under the titles human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD). In this approach, management carries the onus for the well-being and development of workers in a comprehensive manner in coordination with the well-being and development of the

enterprise. Considerable emphasis is placed on democratic management concepts such as mutuality, trust, holistic development, training, participation and empowerment. Workers and unions are projected as being treated as partners in this integrated managerial process. Unions are exhorted to abandon their adversarial role and collaborate in the march to progress. Ironically, these noble experiments in human development are often pursued along with determined plans to cut down labour costs by technological upgradations, outsourcing of production and reduction of employment. HRM-HRD executives find themselves being charged with the responsibility to deal with human development issues of employees, on the one hand, and to monitor plans for premature retirement or retrenchment, on the other. It would be interesting to learn how such potentially conflicting roles affect a manager's personal and social sensibilities. In the corporate world, the ability of an enterprise to reduce employment has become an important factor in judgements on its health and viability. Meanwhile, social globe-watchers in the West have already begun to draw scenarios of a society where goods and services will be produced entirely or predominantly without human inputs (see Kelly 2000).

Let us look at the downside of the corporate *mantra* of employment downsizing (see Breman 2003). Increasing casualisation of labour has generated irregularities and uncertainties of income and raised levels of immediate and long-term insecurity for workers and their families. Concurrently, measures such as voluntary retirement, layoff and closure of enterprise have created a large population of ex-workers in blue-collar and white-collar categories. They face various kinds of unintended consequences of separation from employment in the midst of a career. Many of those who are pushed out by closure of industry are suddenly pauperised. Their families join them in suffering diminished ability to fulfil social obligations and diminished self and social esteem. Such people are often forced into dehumanising or anti-social callings for livelihood. Those who fall into premature retirement with what is known as a 'golden handshake' may not necessarily face economic hurdles. However, many of them go through experiences of psychological and social alienation in their status as workers and citizens.

Meanwhile, the new tribe of knowledge workers tied to the new mass media of information, communication, entertainment, education and the like is growing rapidly everywhere. These people work as individuals with distinctly individualistic equations with their work-technology and organisation. They enjoy economic affluence with a relatively high social status and recognition. Their ideas and concerns

regarding job security and career growth are likely to be different from those of other categories of labour. They may develop little collective consciousness as employees and distance themselves from trade unionism. This category of labour constitutes an area of special interest for social science.

We should also take note of a special segment of our labour force. I refer to the relatively rich, affluent and powerful workers—technocrats, bureaucrats, professionals and such types of self-employed and salaried workers. They constitute labour aristocracy living on high-income islands. They tend to follow the dictum ‘the more I have, the more I need’. They wield collective strength through unions or union-like combinations. Many of them are associated with services that are essential or crucial for the citizenry. This gives them added strength to put pressures on employers. Here, we can often see or suffer conventional union power in its socially damaging form. The distance between this condition and human development needs to be examined in terms of degrees of excessive freedom, justice and individualism and the ways of regulating the excesses.

We should also remember that abuse of freedom and justice has ceased to be the monopoly of the upper rungs of social hierarchy. Economic opportunities are increasingly becoming available to small segments of population even among the poorest. A large part of these opportunities arises from the needs for subcontractors and workers in the legal and not-so-legal enterprises commanded by political and business bosses of the underworld. We know that people all over the socio-economic strata partake of big incomes and political power as a part of the workforce in the parallel economy. With pots of money and tons of raw power in their hands, they easily get into a quagmire of commodities and crime. This underbelly of the field of labour constitutes a significant potential area of attention for social science.

### **Unorganised Sector**

The unorganised or informal sector of labour constitutes about 90 percent of the total workforce and covers divergent states of socioeconomic activities in rural and urban areas (Singh 1991, Breman 2003). Agriculture, construction, cottage industry, vending, wayside business, self-employed workers, domestic services and many other types of labour fall within this category. Here, employees or workers are either not protected by any labour law or exploited by employers who violate laws with the help of bureaucracy. Recruitment is usually based



on primordial loyalties such as kinship, caste and language. It is widely known that the norms of minimum wages prescribed by government for various categories of workers are disregarded by employers who possess political power and capacity to buy off official intervention. They also have social and economic leverage over workers who are bound to them by indebtedness or patronage. Workers, on their part, suffer from lack of collective consciousness and political power. They are also divided in terms of caste or caste combinations in perennial conflict with one another. Conventional trade unions have usually distanced themselves from this category of workers. At many places, voluntary service organisations have been engaged in serving the unorganised workers. They combine the role of trade unions with their other major responsibilities. These efforts have served to raise workers' consciousness about their conditions and rights. Some of these organisations have acquired strength and resources to undertake comprehensive human development work for their constituents. Their programmes include skill development, finance, marketing and roles within family and society. Some of these ventures are known to have achieved exemplary success in human development.

Women have been entering the labour force in increasing proportions (see Carr *et al* 1996). This trend is likely to continue as a result of the rise in female literacy and changing status of the woman in family as well as in the society at large. The new consumerist culture has generated new needs for income at all levels, which may also push women into the labour force. Increasing employment of women may help the process of liberalisation in ideas of female rights and gender equity. However, female workers in today's society may have to grapple with various types of harassment and exploitation. Male dominance is likely to oppress women at home and at work for a long time. This condition is often reinforced by willing acceptance of women of their inferior status and subordinate role in family regardless of the actual support their income may lend to the family.

Child labour is a major social problem of our society. Children are employed and exploited in all types of jobs in the informal sector (see Chaudhri 1996). They work limitlessly for their bosses. They are paid ridiculously low wages. They have little freedom or ability to protest. They bring coveted incomes to parents. Denial of individual freedom and opportunity for minimum personal and social development is the obvious price paid by child workers. Government legislation against employment of children is largely ineffective due to perceived compusions of greedy employers and impoverished families. In fact, this is an

area of labour where everybody seems to show social consciousness about criticality of a social evil and urgency to deal with it but unable to obtain results. Across nations and regions, we point fingers at others, but cannot set our own house in order.

We have a large mass of people in the labour force who are totally unemployed or seasonally employed or employed marginally with unpredictable or irregular chances of petty jobs. Insofar as these people are the main breadwinners for their families, they lead pauperised existence and a sense of alienation in self-respect, dignity and social worth. Governments have been sensitive to the problems of this category and, over the decades, launched schemes and plans for exigent employment and social security. However, these efforts have yielded only marginal results (see Hirway and Terhal 1990). The field of labour bears a massive force of tailenders, who work, earn and consume in fits and starts and manage somehow to keep their body and soul together. One wonders if they dream of any mentionable trickle-in from the benefits earned by 'India Incorporated' in pursuit of our collective dream of emergence as a global power.

### Emerging Patterns

I should now try to collect the main signals in the field of labour emerging from the broad-brush picture I have presented. The social construct of labour is ideally coterminous with the construct of work. The chief executive of an enterprise is its first worker. Proximity to capital or entrepreneurship does not exclude a person or position from the cohort of labour. An important task of social science today in studies of labour is to learn where a given position, group or category stands on the path of human development. The goal on this path should be viewed in two dimensions: *quality of life* (in terms of standards of nutrition, health, education, equity, justice, empowerment, etc.) and *social character* (in terms of control over individualism, greed, acquisitiveness, insensitivity to others' needs, etc.).

The field of labour is complex, uneven and stratified. At the upper end, we meet the affluent, privileged and powerful aristocracy of labour. They face no shortages in achieving high standards in quality of life. In fact, their existing resources of wealth and power fuel a tendency to multiply the assets. They possess considerable union power to promote their ideas and demands. Their clubs and combinations can generate as much pressure on society as any militant trade union can wield. Concurrently, they have the means to participate aggressively in the world of

consumerism and individualism. This may place them far short of the goal in the social character dimension of development

People on the lower rungs of hierarchy survive at various distances, but mostly far away, from the goals of quality of life. Their social existence is dominated by degrees of poverty, deprivation, indignity and powerlessness. Growing social awareness of the developmental needs of these categories has led to widespread action by government, voluntary organisations and civil society in general for improvement of their material conditions, social esteem, self-dependence and skills of governance. These efforts have yielded and will continue to yield reassuring dividends. However, the huge magnitude of the task of development of the poor warrants no more than a modest vision of people leisurely inching towards the goal. The path is laden with other roadblocks too. First, the material and human resources earmarked for development frequently get diverted to satisfy vicarious needs of the greedy and the powerful. Second, exercises in empowerment of the powerless often end in yielding greater real power to the powerful behind the façade of power formally attributed to the less privileged. Third, the poor and the deprived who gain material benefits in the labour market may fall in the trap of consumerism and remain as distant from the development goals as ever. This makes for a double whammy. material gains are offset by fall in quality of life as well as in social character.

The layers of labour between the two ends of hierarchy would cover a wide span of material conditions, benefits of labour laws and unionisation. Legal entitlements on emoluments, working conditions, job security, welfare and union rights place workers on a high ground in quality of life. Progressive management practices in employee motivation and workplace democracy enhance the gains in quality of life. However, the existence of congenial institutions and conventions for enrichment of quality of life does not uniformly lead to progress in human development. The institutional base of trade unions, labour laws, bargaining and dispute-settling devices and participative management have constantly been used, misused or abused by various stakeholders for sectional political or economic ends. Now the new power of global market and technology seems to pose a major challenge to the status of labour in industry.<sup>4</sup> One notices a gradual erosion in the significance of labour. In the world of technology, market and capital, labour is increasingly regarded as a commodity. Curiously, this trend grows along with growth of new models for humanisation of management of people in enterprise. I have earlier indicated the human consequences of commo-

dification of labour. However, we are just beginning to feel the tremors of this transformation. Social science needs to monitor future events as a vital going concern.

The new wave in labour relations has also led to erosion in the role of trade unions. Unions are admonished to shed their adversarial posture and play the game of partnership with management in human resource development for the growth of industry. An alternative suggestion is for unions to expand their scope and become agencies for integrated human development of workers including their work environment and work relations. The question we need to raise is why do unions play an adversarial role? Our unions have often played adversarial roles for political reasons. However, the logic of adversarial role is embedded in the social reality of unfair, unjust or illegal treatment received by labour at the hands of employers and others. Trade unions are necessary and relevant as long as unfairness and injustice remain in employment relations. The logic of trade unionism, which has never been a closed issue in social science, has just got more widely open. The future of a precious, but much-maligned, modern institution seems to be in the dock for judgement on its worth in the upcoming knowledge society.

## Notes

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- 1 An appealing expression of such humanist concern is contained in Elton Mayo (1946).
- 2 A comprehensive treatment of the concept of human development and its application is available in S. Fukuda-Parr and A. K. Shiva Kumar (2003).
- 3 My main source of information for statements made here is T. B. Bottomore and Maximilien Rubel (1973).
- 4 For perspectives on the future of labour and trade unions, see Peter Ackers (2002), Navin Chandra (2002), and Deepak Nayyar (2003).

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# **The Declining Rice-Fish Farming: A Case Study from North Kerala**

***K.N. Nair, Vineetha Menon and R. Mahesh***

*In the coastal regions of India, a complex and ecologically responsive farming system has evolved over centuries. In this system, rice and fish cultivation alternates through a mechanism of water control. This paper discusses the evolution of the socio-political and institutional arrangements in such an integrated farming system (known as kaipad cultivation) in Ezhome Panchayat in Kerala that emerged out of collective action, and documents how they could not be sustained. The decline of kaipad cultivation has been adversely affecting the livelihoods of a segment of agricultural labour households, especially the women and the elderly. There are several constraints to the revival of this cultivation. Nevertheless, reviving this is vital for eco-restoration and to ensure justice to the disadvantaged people.*

## **Introduction**

A complex and ecologically responsive rice-fish farming system has evolved in the coastal regions of India over centuries.<sup>1</sup> The rice culture in these lands takes place under either deep or floating water conditions. There is no accurate estimate of the area under this cultivation, according to one estimate, it is about 0.7 million hectares (Barker *et al* 1985). The rice varieties cultivated are traditional types, with an average yield of 1.5-2 tonnes per hectare. An important characteristic of this farming system is that, to facilitate the cultivation of rice during part of the year, the land has to be dewatered for sowing, and subsequently protected from saline water intrusion for crop growth, rest of the year it remains under fresh or saline water depending on the ecological setting. For the organisation of this farming, not only for the cultivation of rice but also for the culture of fish, different types of water control are required. There are variations in this farming across regions depending on the ecological, technological, institutional and organisational arrangements conditioning the wetland resource base.<sup>2</sup> While this farming has attracted some attention from agricultural and fisheries scientists, the

socioeconomic and institutional factors and processes shaping rice-fish farming have hardly received any attention from social scientists

In this paper, we take a close look at the rice-fish farming in Ezhome Panchayat in Payyannur Block in Kannur District of Kerala, adjacent to the mouth of Pazhayangadi-Kuppam River. Here, over the years, a system of alternate farming of rice and fish has evolved, locally known as *kaipad* cultivation. An earlier study had shown that the wetland resource base in this region has been undergoing massive degradation (Nayak *et al* 2000), another study has highlighted that it is the poor and the under-privileged of the society who are the worst affected by this process (Menon 2000). It has also been observed that inequalitarian distribution of natural resources as productive assets under different property right regimes (common pool, private and state property regimes) leads to collective action by stakeholder groups that develop appropriate institutional and organisational arrangements for the equitable and efficient utilisation of the resources (Baland and Platteau 1999). Micro-level studies on such arrangements often do not take into account the impact of the interaction between external factors—like migration, markets, infrastructure development etc.—and the internal, local level factors and processes on the shaping of institutions and resource utilisation, and its consequences for various social groups and social relations (Agarwal 1998, Leach *et al* 1999, Agrawal 2001).

In this micro study, we address some of these less explored issues in institutional and organisational arrangements in natural resource management in *kaipad*. We have followed North's (1990) conceptual distinction between *institutions* as 'rules of the game in society' and *organisations* as 'the players or groups of individuals bound together by some common purpose to achieve objectives'. The data were collected through focus-group discussions with knowledgeable local people, government functionaries, political leaders, farmers, agricultural labourers, bund owners, fish harvesting lessees, and other local people in the Panchayat, and a statistical survey using a structured questionnaire (see Annexure).

We begin with a discussion of the rice-fish farming operations in the wetland ecosystem and then trace the evolution of the sociopolitical and institutional arrangements in *kaipad* farming. This is followed by an analysis of the survey data on *kaipad* farming to arrive at a comparative understanding of the differential impact of *kaipad* decline on the cultivator households and the labour households. The dependence of rural labour households belonging mostly to the former agriculture slave

caste, the Pulayas (Saradamoni 1980, 1981) on *kaipad* will be evident from the analysis.

### **The Wetland Ecosystem and *Kaipad* Farming**

The wetland ecosystem where *kaipad* farming evolved consists of marshes, swamps, ponds, paddy fields, etc., and constitutes an important landmass for controlling floods, sedimentation and pollution. The area is swampy and waterlogged, experiencing floods during the rainy season and salinity during summer months due to nearness to the river that merges into the sea. The tidal currents from the nearby sea move through the river and enter the *kaipad* fields during the high tide and flow out from them during the low tide. Except during the rainy season, the river water is usually saline. During summer, when the river flow is low, salt water from the sea enters it. When the water level in the river rises, either due to tides or due to rain, the river water flows into the paddy fields. The tidal waves entering the fields through the river keep the soil moist even during the summer months. As these lands are immersed in river water, they get rich deposits of highly fertile organic matter, therefore, paddy cultivation requires no artificial manuring and fish species receive adequate food.

Ezhome Panchayat has an undulating landscape with hills and valleys interspersed with the low-lying *kaipad* lands. These lands lie adjacent to Pazhayangadi River and have a spread of about four hundred hectares, stretching from Kuppam to Pazhayangadi town, to the north of Pazhayangadi-Kuppam River and south of Pazhayangadi-Thaliparambhu road. The Kuppam River takes an abrupt turn towards the south when it reaches Pazhayangadi, creating several tiny islands and mud flats in Ezhome.

Ezhome Panchayat covers an area of 21 sq km, according to the 1991 census,<sup>3</sup> it had a population of 18,555, of which 9,433 were females and 9,122 males. The average household size was 5.85. According to the 1930 Revenue Settlement Register, the paddy fields of Ezhome Panchayat extended to 831 hectares. During the British rule, the revenue authorities called this place 'The Akiab' of Chirakal Taluk, after Akiab in Burma, which had the highest yield of rice in the world. The area of paddy fields in Ezhome has now come down to 361 hectares (Ezhome Grama Panchayat 1997).

The *kaipad* agriculture is rich in customs, traditions and local knowledge, which are reflected in the beliefs and practices of the local people, owing largely to their proximity to the natural resource base.



## Paddy Cultivation

As *kaipad* fields are low-lying and immersed in water they have to be dried before starting agricultural operations. The tidal flows have to be controlled to prevent water from entering the fields. For this purpose bunds have been constructed at the narrow ridges of the *kaipad* fields near the river.<sup>4</sup> The bunds, locally known as *chira* or *kandi*, are made up of sticky mud collected from the riverbanks and wild grasses. On an average, the bunds are about ten feet broad, with height a little over the water level during the high tides. The flow of water is regulated by a *mancha* (a wooden sluice gate).

Agricultural operations for rice cultivation begin by mid-April. The saline water is drained out completely, and the fields are left to dry for about a month. Once the fields are dried, small mounds (*potta*) of one-and-a-half feet in diameter and two feet in height are formed. By the middle of May these operations will be over. The farmers then wait for the monsoon rains. By June, the southwest monsoon arrives and, as it strengthens, the salinity of the soil in the mounds is washed down by rainwater. When there is adequate fresh water flow in the river, the water outlets of the bunds are opened. From this time onwards, tidal flows are not controlled throughout the crop season. The fresh river water tides wash down the salinity of the soil.

Before sowing, farmers soak the seeds in water for about 24 hours and leave the wet seeds for three days in gunny bags to germinate. The germinated seeds—a variety known as *kuthir*—are sown on the mounds. After one-and-a-half months of growth, the seedlings become mature enough for transplantation. The seedlings in the mounds are dug out along with the root soil by male workers and are planted uniformly by women workers in the field after removing the weeds. The transplanting work will be over by July end. Weeding is done during mid-August. In this method of cultivation, neither organic nor chemical fertilisers are used, nor are pesticides applied. Thus, it is absolutely an eco-friendly farming method, which is practised without any change even to this day. Timely harvesting depends on the intensity and distribution of rainfall. It is said that some amount of drizzling is required during pollination, if there is too much rainfall or lack of rainfall, the crop will fail. Furthermore, if the rainfall is low, saline water enters the field during tides and destroys the crop. The crop is usually harvested between the end of September and mid-October.

### Prawn Filtration

After the paddy harvest, the *kaipad* fields are used for prawn filtration, a practice widespread in the coastal wetlands of Kerala.<sup>5</sup> Since the *mancha* is kept open when the water in the canal reaches its highest level, the tidal water enters the fields with the maximum force. Prawns and other fish move into the fields through the tidal current. The number of young prawns entering the field largely depends on the force and duration of the current. During the tidal inflow, a conical shaped net with an opening at the end is fixed inside the *mancha*. This net lets in prawns and fish with the tidal flow, but it would not let them out. After the tide, the net is removed and a filter is kept at the mouth of the *mancha* to prevent prawns and fishes from flowing out from the fields. Water is let in during the two tides. The fields are kept under water for two to three months, allowing the prawns and other small fish to grow. Rice stubble is believed to be a good fertiliser, producing a dense growth of algae, upon the detritus of which the prawns fatten.

Fish filtration begins on *Ekadasi*, the eleventh day from the full moon or the new moon day, and ends three or four days after the full moon or the new moon day. Each harvest is called *Ach*, thus, in a month there may be two *Ach* having fourteen or fifteen days of shrimp filtration during the waxing or the waning phases of the moon. On these days, early in the morning, a net is placed at the outlet of the *mancha* during ebb flow and prawns are filtered in. This method is locally known as *kandi koodal*. The summer filtration continues up to 14 April (*Medam 1*, the *Vishu Sankranti* day), the beginning of the new agricultural year. The species obtained in the fish harvest are mainly *kara chemmeen* (*penaeus monodon*, popularly known as tiger prawn), *vella chemmeen* (a meta *penaeus* species), *naran chemmeen* (*penaeus indicus*), *thelli chemmeen* (small-size shrimps), and fishes like *yetta*, *paral*, *irumeen*, *kauva*, *chootachi* and *malan*, and crabs. The agricultural labourers having skill in this job do prawn filtration and all other items of work on the bunds. A small hut is constructed on the bund for the workers to stay, as most of the work is carried out during night. To avoid poaching, a watchman is stationed there during day and night for the entire season.

The *kaipad* fields become common access property on *Vishu Sankranti* day. From then onwards anyone can fish from these private paddy fields. Usually the bund owners and/or the leased-in fish harvesters undertake intensive fishing before opening the area out to the public. To maximise the harvest, two or three days before *Vishu Sankranti*, the owner allows anyone with any technique to fish in the fields, on the

condition that half the catch will be given to him. This practice is called *kandi kalakkal* ('churning the field'). After *kandi kalakkal*, *kaipad* fields would remain as a common pool resource for the next two months. During this period, the agricultural workers, mainly the Pulaya women who have some traditional methods to trap fish,<sup>6</sup> and a traditional fishermen community, who during other seasons fish from the river and public canals using nylon nets of different kinds (*veesu vala*, *kamba vala*, *kuti vala*, etc.) and hook and line, do fishing in these fields. Fish filtration takes place during the monsoon, too, under the system called *varsha kettu*, fish is filtered daily at all ebb outs. However, these monsoon catches are usually very low.

### **Evolution of Sociopolitical and Institutional Arrangements in Kaipad**

Complex sociopolitical and institutional arrangements have evolved in the *kaipad* system in response to many factors, some of which are location-specific and some, external. The study region has witnessed several peasant struggles for securing land-ownership and fishing rights, and struggles by agricultural labourers for increased wages and improved working conditions. In response to the increasing importance of fish culture over rice farming in the *kaipad* lands, the leasing arrangements have also changed significantly. Also, with the disintegration of the joint family system, an interesting property right regime has evolved for sharing the rent on the fishing grounds. Political parties and their ideologies have been significant in mediating these institutional arrangements. Based on the information gathered from focus-group discussions and interviews with key informants, we will sketch below the changes in institutional arrangements.

About a hundred years ago, three traditional aristocratic families were said to have owned the entire land in the Ezhome *kaipad* region: the Chirakal Kovilakom, a royal family, and the Muthedathu Illom and Eledethu Illom, two Namboothiri Brahmin families. These families did not cultivate their lands, but leased them out to many tenants. The rent used to be fixed based on the quantity of the paddy used as seed during a crop period. Three people, Palangadan Kelu Nambiar, Muvakan Hassan and Chappan Mohamed, had leased in most of the *kaipad* land from the three landlords. They leased out, in turn, some of their leased-in land to smaller cultivators. Thus, then the cultivators in *kaipad* land consisted of large and small cultivators who directly leased in land from landlords,

and small cultivators who leased in land from the large tenant cultivators

The agricultural labourers, especially the Pulayas (scheduled caste), were bonded to the feudal landlords according to a custom known as *aneem valleem*. During the beginning of the agricultural season, on *Vishu Sankranti* day, these labourers had to collect from their landlords some rice, a tumbler of oil, a piece of coconut, some jackfruits, a dhoti, and a piece of jaggery—consumables they were expected to survive on for the next one year, thus, a symbol of their bondage to the landlords. This custom was embedded in the traditional caste system in which the marginalised lower caste Hindu communities (like the Pulayas) who were agricultural labourers were bonded in a servitude to the upper caste Namboothiris and Nair landlord families. The disintegration of the joint family system and the emergent political consciousness and unionisation of the agricultural labourers, which led to struggles for their rights, ended this traditional relationship.

During 1968-1970, Ezhome witnessed several struggles between agricultural labourers and the new landowners. In 1968, under the leadership of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI [M]), an agricultural labour union—Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union (KSKTU)—was formed. The KSKTU took up as its priority the struggle to end the practice of *aneem valleem*. It demanded the implementation of minimum wages, fixed by the United Democratic Front Government in 1970. The landlords refused to accept this demand and they kept the union workers away from work. This led to a massive agitation with strikes and demonstrations in Ezhome in which the agricultural workers brandished farm implements. This agitation finally forced the landlords to accept the demands of the Union.

With the abolition of the tenancy system, the agricultural labour households got the ownership of their hutment (*kudikidappu*) lands, and with it, a sense of security and a heightened sense of belonging to the Union. The conflict between landlords and the Union workers had intensified. In the name of protecting the bunds and carrying other works in the bund, the landlords brought in some 'hooligans' from south Malabar, and they began to threaten and assault the local labourers. One night, the workers organised a resistance and chased the 'hooligans' away. In the melee, one of the 'hooligans' lost his life. The police charged the CPI (M) leaders with homicide and arrested them. Several agitators were accused and sent to jail without bail, but subsequently freed by the courts for lack of sufficient evidence. Struggles like these helped the

agricultural labourers to achieve improved working conditions and wages

With the implementation of the Land Reforms in 1970, all the tenants got ownership rights on the lands. Now ownership of *kaipad* lands is mainly with some intermediate Hindu Thiyya caste families and Muslims, excepting a few upper caste Nambiar (a subcaste of Nair) families who were landowners even before the Reforms. The land ownership-caste nexus in the village has thus undergone significant changes.

The land reforms gave the *kaipad* tenants not just the ownership of the lands they were cultivating, but also the ownership rights of all the living organisms in the water bodies on this land. Accordingly, the shrimps and fish in the land became the property of the owners of the land. However, their realisation of this right did not come about automatically with the legislation, it required organised, protracted struggles with the bund owners who had the control of water in the *kaipad* lands. A knowledge of the bund as an institutional arrangement is vital for an understanding of the transformations in *kaipad* agriculture and the waxing power of the political parties.

During the early part of the twentieth century, bunds were constructed as small water control works for dewatering the fields and controlling the water inflow, facilitating the shift in cultivation technique from broadcasting of seeds to mound-making. It was the big tenants and landlords who invested in these works. However, other cultivators, whose lands fell within the command of these bunds, also benefited from this technological innovation. Since the control and ownership of these bunds vested with the big landlords and tenants, it became a source of power for them over the small cultivators. As prawns, shrimps and crabs had no local market then, the agricultural labourers had easy access to these as supplementary food.<sup>7</sup> With the development of an export market for prawns and the commercial fish-filtration becoming lucrative, more actors like the fish harvesters-cum-traders and exporters-cum-money-lenders entered this activity.

The development of prawn/fish culture as an important activity in *kaipad* lands has resulted in the emergence of new contractual arrangements in the agrarian set-up. As the land falling within the command of a bund is owned by several cultivators, it is difficult for the bund owner to negotiate with them for fixing the *cheni-reen panam*, the monetary compensation for forgoing the fishing rights. This is further complicated by the inheritance rights over the bunds. With the break up of the joint family, a bund owned by a family would have many ownership

claimants. As the bund can be utilised only as a single entity, it constitutes an indivisible property, but there can be any number of owners with different types of income-sharing patterns. So, collective decision-making is followed in the working of the bunds. Another interesting factor is that the bund owner cannot demolish the bund or make any change harmful to the cultivators inside the bund. An individual's ownership right is limited to having his share of income from prawn filtration and sale or transfer of his ownership rights. He is not allowed to make any physical changes on the bund. In certain cases, a bund could be jointly owned by different families belonging to different castes. The Kanooth Kai bund is a case in point. The members of two families belonging to two different castes—Thiyya and Nambiar—jointly own this bund. Excepting this bund, bund owners in Ezhome are all Muslims. Due to the matrilineal system prevalent among the Muslims here, some of these bunds have joint ownership ranging from 12 to 120. The sharing pattern in the group ownership is proportional to the shares owned by the families. With the partitioning of the joint family properties, the share for each individual is fixed according to the provisions of the agreement in the partition deeds. The sharing of revenue from bund ownership is further complicated with the owners having different levels of the share according to the Muslim matrilineal inheritance laws. The entitlement of *chemmeen panam* by an owner depends upon his proportion of total shares. With the existence of innumerable owners, it is not surprising that there is also absentee bund ownership. Because of all this, all bund owners cannot be organisationally involved in the fish filtration technique directly. Thus, the practice of leasing out fish filtration rights<sup>8</sup> to contracted harvesters (*pattakaran*) has come about. The summer filtration (*venal kettu*) and monsoon filtration (*varsha kettu*) are leased out separately.<sup>9</sup> The harvester is responsible for the re-strengthening and repairing of the bund and the sluice.

The emergence of the harvester as an actor in these institutional arrangements brings in a process of contractual arrangement between the bund owner or the authorised representative-bund owner (in a group ownership situation) and the harvester. The bund owner is entitled to a rent for the season if fish filtration rights are contracted out to a harvester. This rent is fixed before the filtration, based on the previous year's catch and an assessment of the market rates for prawns, and a part of the agreed amount is paid in advance. For the summer filtration, the harvester is responsible for sharing the income from the fish catch as *chemmeen panam* with the landowner/s inside the bund who had to

forego their fishing rights. In the absence of harvesters, the bund owners pay this *chemmeen panam*.

The entitlement of the cultivators inside the bund to *chemmeen panam* was obtained only after prolonged struggles. Due to the increased income generation from prawn culture in *kaipad* lands, even after implementation of the Land Reforms Act, the bund owners were not prepared to recognise the demand of the cultivators for a share of the income from the fish harvests. The cultivators formed the *Kaipad* Action Committee (KAC) to fight for this right under the leadership of the CPI (M) along with the KSKTU, the agricultural labour union of the CPI (M), and Karshaka Sanghom Ezhome Village Committee (a cultivators' organisation under the CPI [M]). The representatives of this Action Committee negotiated with the bund owners on the sharing of the fish harvest with the cultivators. Most of the bund owners accepted the idea of sharing the fish harvest with the cultivators having land inside the bund. However, one of the prominent bund owners defied this. In response, the *kaipad* Action Committee decided to construct a separate bund on the fields. On 8 January 1972, the cultivators, agricultural labourers, and CPI (M) party workers joined and constructed a bund parallel to Akathee Kai bund, across their fields, thus taking over water control and fishing rights. The bund owners then capitulated and consented to a payment of *chemmeen panam* to compensate for their loss of fishing rights and income from it. It was agreed upon that from the summer filtration the cultivators would be given an equal share as the owners, (40 percent each) but that the owners would get the remaining 20 percent for maintaining the bunds. The monsoon filtration revenue being not very substantial compared with the summer filtration, the landowners do not receive any share. If leased out, the bund owner receives separate rent for the monsoon filtration, and this amount is fixed through a separate negotiation process between the harvester and the bund owner/authorised representative in joint ownership.

The amount to be paid by the bund owner/harvester to the landholders as the share of shrimp filtration is fixed towards the end of the summer filtration. The *karshaka sanghom* (farmers' union) inside each bund area meets separately and discusses the amount to be claimed as *chemmeen panam* from the harvester. The amount is estimated based on the yield of shrimps per hectare of land<sup>10</sup> and its price in the market, and previous year's *chemmeen panam*. The information on the yield is collected from the workers involved in the fish filtration in the bunds and based on the time taken to sort the catch during the filtration days. Thereafter the KAC convenes a meeting of all the *karshaka sanghoms*.

under it to find out their demands. Once their demands are heard, the KAC meets with the bund owners/harvesters and informs them the demand of *karshaka sanghoms* and listens to the views of the bund owners/harvesters. Before the meeting with KAC, the bund owners/harvesters would have met informally to discuss and decide the tactics to be adopted and the maximum amount to be agreed upon as *chemmeen panam*. The KAC, having obtained this information, again discusses the matter with farmers' unions. This process could go on for two or three rounds before a final decision is arrived at. Once KAC arrives at a decision after this prolonged mediation, it is usually unchallenged. The KAC also collects the *chemmeen panam* and distributes it to the individual owners or harvesters, depending on their share.<sup>11</sup> The unchallenged power of the KAC is largely derived from the power of the political party to which it is affiliated.

It is an indisputable fact that political parties have been playing an active role in mediating the actions and interactions between the various categories of agrarian population in the *kaipad* region. Their influence is evident from the fact that nearly two-thirds of the cultivators are members of political parties, especially of the CPI (M). According to our survey, about 75 percent of the cultivators actively participated in political parties. In the case of the agricultural labourers, as noted earlier, the CPI (M) has played a leading role in unionising them and organising struggles for higher wages and better working conditions for them. However, political affiliation to the same party has not been powerful enough to wipe out the tensions arising out of the conflicts of self-interest between cultivators and labourers. While the former views the trade unions as inimical to their interests, and as an organisation whose basic motive is to increase the wages of its members by adopting various tactics including restricting labour supply, the latter view the cultivators as exploiters who try to keep the wages down, rather than as party kinsmen sharing the same political ideology. The labourers view the landowners as an alien group parading under the banner of the party only to engage in collective bargaining with bund owners to obtain the maximum rent as *chemmeen panam*, according to them, the party is interested only in fixing the *chemmeen panam*, as both the party and the politicians stand to benefit monetarily from the bargain.

The importance of the bund as a lucrative entrepreneurial activity can be gauged from the fact that even the Panchayat, the local self-governing administrative unit, has developed business interests.<sup>12</sup> The Komath bund, the largest bund in Ezhome, is owned by the Panchayat. Before land reforms, this bund was owned by a prominent family in the



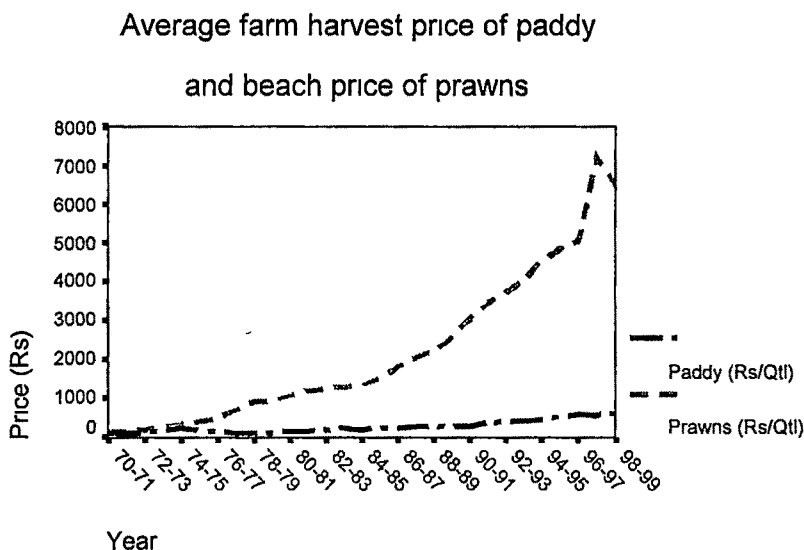
region Due to difficulties in maintaining the bund, they gave away the bund to the Panchayat free of cost The Panchayat began leasing it out for fish filtration every year by giving the 40 percent share of *chemmeen panam* to the landholders inside the bund and utilising 20 percent of the rent for the maintenance of the bund and retaining the remaining 40 percent due to the bund owner

The bund as an institutional arrangement has also been contributing to the development of other forms of contractual arrangements like the one between the harvester and the prawn exporter The exporter advances credit to the harvester for meeting the rent payment to the bund owner and other expenses on the condition that all the fish catch will be sold only to him When exporters are thus involved, the negotiation process between the harvester and the bund owner would be influenced by the negotiations between the exporter and the harvester Price of prawns could thus be a factor in these negotiations and the contractual arrangements agreed upon

The institutional arrangements discussed above have undergone changes due to the influence of a variety of factors that have been operating in the local economy and society in particular and the state of Kerala in general Among these factors, the changes in the prices of output from *kaipad*, namely, rice and prawns, is a significant factor deserving closer attention Under the influence of the growing export market for prawns, its export prices have shown a continuous increase over time At the same time, because of the state policy of ensuring the food security of the population by expanding the coverage and effectiveness, the public distribution system (PDS) has created a dampening effect on the price of rice in the state This process has been furthered by the expansion of private trade in food grains, facilitated by the increased availability of rice from other regions in the country and removal of restrictions on the interstate movement of food grains In recent years, under the pressure of the reform process initiated in the country, the effectiveness of PDS has declined, while the influence of private trade has considerably improved The overall effect of this process has been the increased availability of rice in the open market and at low prices Thus, over the last three decades, while the price of prawns has continued to increase, the price of rice has lagged behind (see Figure 1), thereby making the prawn culture more attractive as compared with rice cultivation

There are many technological and organisational factors besides product prices that have influenced the farmers' decision concerning *kaipad*

Figure 1



Source Paddy Prices - Dept Economics & Statistics, Govt of Kerala

Prawn Prices - Directorate of Fisheries, Govt of Kerala

farming State intervention in water control is one such technological factor In the mid-1960s, the Kattamballi Project<sup>13</sup> was undertaken to prevent the intrusion of saline water and to supply fresh water into the *kaipad* lands in the region of which Ezhome is a part This was intended to reduce the risk in the first crop and to improve the prospects of raising a second crop of paddy However, the Project did not produce the expected results, instead, it has resulted in the intrusion of saline water and reduced the supply of fresh water to the fields in the summer months, thereby adversely affecting the ecological conditioning suited to *kaipad* farming<sup>14</sup>

As for the organisational factors, the shortage in the supply of agricultural labourers and the increase in their real and money wages noted all over the state have been visible in the *kaipad* areas also (Baby 1996, 2001). Because of the diversification of the economy and expansion of non-farm employment opportunities, the supply of labour to the agricultural sector has been on the decline Rice cultivation, being a labour-intensive activity, has become the worst affected in this process

Cultivators are now more interested in prawn filtration than rice cultivation There is a lucrative export market for shrimps and prawns, and high prices in the domestic market, following the international demand The *kaipad* landowners have no role in the fish-filtration

process operated in the bunds, other than that of sharing their private access right with the harvester. For most of the farmers, the *chemmeen panam* is an incentive. Due to the impact of the Gulf boom and the escalated land price here, mainly for construction activities, land that was once only a means of production, has now become a prominent exchange commodity. The owners of *kaipad* lands who are not depending on rice cultivation hold on to the land only because it is a secure asset and a source of secondary income, accruing from fish filtration. With the increase in population, spread of education, and changes in the socio-economic conditions of the people, activities in the non-agricultural sector like trade, transport, etc. have expanded. This has led to increased demand for land for residential purposes, shops, roads, etc. The price of land, especially the land suited for construction purposes, has been increasing rapidly. To meet these new demands for land, only *kaipad* wetlands are available here. Gradually, therefore, people have started filling the wetlands for non-agricultural purposes.

There was a time in the memory of our informants when most small and marginal holders employed family labour in their farms. There was also the common practice of exchanging the services of family labour among small and marginal cultivators during the peak seasons. The exchange of family labour largely reduced their dependency on hired labour during peak periods, especially at the time of transplanting and harvesting. With this family labour gone, there is now heavy dependence on hired labour, even in small and marginal holdings. For the big cultivators who have been depending on hired labour, except for supervision and management, this shift has not been of serious consequence, but the small cultivators have been greatly affected.

At the same time, in the post-land reform period, there has been a sharp reduction in the number and proportion of workers in the total work force, as evidenced from the census data for 1971 and 1991. The cultivators and agricultural labourers have declined both in terms of numbers and as a proportion of labour force. On the other hand, the workers in the construction sector have shown a considerable increase (see En 3). These changes in the supply of labour have aggravated the scarcity of both hired and family labour in agriculture. A good proportion of the younger generation is enrolled in educational institutions. They consider agriculture as an inferior occupation. Consequently, there is a preference for work in the secondary and the tertiary sectors than in the farm sector. This is the major reason for non-involvement of family members in farming operations. Besides, most of the parents in the labour households have no interest in their children following their

occupation, and the children too are not interested in working in knee-deep muddy waters. The youngsters are hesitant to take up agriculture even when they do not have any other gainful employment. With chances of supplementary food gone, with the denial of common access to fishing in the *kaipad* fields, *kaipad* agriculture is no longer a way of life.

### Kaipad Farming: Findings from the Household Survey

The observations regarding the decline in *kaipad* cultivation discussed in the preceding section are supported by the findings from a sample survey of the cultivator households. According to the survey, about 50 percent of the geographical area of Ezhome is under *kaipad* and the rest is under various other uses (see Table 1). Strikingly, about 40 percent of the *kaipad* lands are currently under fallow. The proportion of *kaipad* land kept fallow is significantly high in the larger size holdings, that is, above 250 cents, accounting for 50 percent of the total fallow.

Table 1 Land utilisation according to size of hold (area in cents)

Land utilisation	Size class total area			
	100	101-250	>250	All
<i>Kaipad</i> cultivation	3893 (53.2)	3711 (26.5)	1787 (18.4)	9391 (30.3)
<i>Kaipad</i> fallow (current)	1667 (22.8)	1451 (10.4)	3197 (32.8)	6315 (20.3)
Other wet-land cultivation	303 (4.1)	2404 (17.2)	687 (7.1)	3394 (10.9)
Mangroves	239 (3.3)	-	224 (2.3)	463 (1.5)
Under dry-land cultivation	924 (12.7)	5959 (42.5)	3017 (31.0)	9900 (31.9)
Area under non-agricultural use	287 (3.9)	476 (3.4)	814 (8.4)	1577 (5.1)
Total	7313 (100.0)	14001 (100.0)	9726 (100.0)	31040 (100.0)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.

Out of the total number of holdings,<sup>15</sup> about 35 percent have been kept fully fallow for the last ten years and 5 percent partly fallow. Only the remaining 60 percent of the holdings fully cultivated their *kaipad*.

lands. This, in turn, shows that there are severe farm-level constraints in putting *kaipad* land under productive use. Our respondents identified shortage of both family and hired labour supply as a major factor influencing their decision in keeping the land fallow.

Turning to the availability of family labour in farm operations, we note that there has been diversification of occupations among *kaipad* cultivator households. About 58 percent of the cultivators reported their main occupation (defined in terms of household income) as agriculture, whereas the remaining 42 percent reported their main occupation as non-agriculture (see Table 2). More than 57 percent of the male workers are in the non-agricultural sector while most female workers are confined to the agricultural sector. The picture that emerges is that of shortage in the availability of family labour in agriculture among a large segment of the farming households. This fact comes out much more sharply from the distribution of households employing family labour and hired labour (see Table 3). It is seen that about 40 percent of the households depended entirely on hired labour for cultivation whereas the remaining 60 percent utilised both family labour and hired labour. Consistent with the diversification into non-agricultural activities among the marginal land-holding cultivators, their dependence on hired labour is also seen to be high.

Table 2 Main occupation of working person in cultivator households by sex

Occupation	Male	Female	Total
Cultivator	75 (38.8)	65 (92.8)	140 (53.0)
Wage employment in agriculture	9 (4.7)	5 (7.2)	14 (5.4)
Wage employment in non-agriculture	68 (35.2)	-	68 (25.9)
Self employed in trade/business	20 (10.4)	-	20 (7.6)
Professional/technical	16 (8.3)	-	16 (6.1)
Others	5 (2.6)	-	5 (1.9)
Total	193 (100.0)	70 (100.0)	263 (100.0)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages

Table 3 Employment of family labour according to size of *kaipad* holding

Size of <i>kaipad</i> holding (cents)	Employing family labour and hired labour	Employing hired labour only	Total
Less than 100	50	55	105
100-250	30	5	35
Above 250	7	3	10
Total	87 (58.0)	63 (42.0)	150 (100.0)

Note Figures in parentheses are percentages

The implication of the labour-hiring practice described above becomes even more evident from an analysis of the labour use in *kaipad* rice cultivation (see Table 4). On an average, cultivation of an acre of *kaipad* paddy used 34 person days of male labour and 42 person days of female labour, including both family labour and hired labour. While most of the male labour is utilised in the pre-planting operations, most of the female labour is utilised in transplanting, harvesting and post-harvest operations.

Table 4 Per acre labour input in *kaipad* cultivation

Type of operation	No. of person days	
	Male	Female
Mound making	19.1	5.3
Boundary strengthening	3.8	-
Land preparation	3.8	2.0
Transplanting	6.2	11.0
Weeding	-	1.1
Harvesting and threshing	0.1	15.2
Transporting	1.3	0.5
Winnowing	-	7.1
All	34.3	42.2

Cultivation of an acre of *kaipad* rice incurred a labour cost of Rs 6,384 (that included paid out costs and imputed cost of family labour), with male labour costing about 55 percent of the total labour cost. The cost of labour in various cultivation operations is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Average wage expenditure incurred for one acre of *kaipad* cultivation

Type of operation	Wage expenditure (Rs)		
	Male	Female	Total
Mound making	1913 7	264 9	2178 6
Boundary strengthening	369 5	-	369 5
Land preparation	364 9	103 7	468 6
Transplanting	621 0	553 9	1174 9
Weeding	-	56 2	56 2
Harvesting and threshing	16 8	1348 7	1365 5
Transporting	1331 2	36 3	167 5
Winnowing	-	603 2	603 2
All	3417 1	2966 9	6384 0

Estimates of the cost of cultivation per acre of *kaipad* showed that, on an average, Rs 6,713 was incurred. It is seen to be higher in the smaller size of holdings and declines with increasing size of holdings (see Table 6). It is significant that about 95 percent of the cost incurred is for labour. As for the yield per acre of *kaipad* land, the lowest size group, that is, less than 100 cents, recorded a yield level (594 kg) higher than the average (519 kg).

According to our estimate of the returns from rice cultivation, at the farm harvest prices that prevailed during the survey year, the value of output from an acre was Rs 4,541 against a cost of Rs 6,713, indicating that this cultivation has become unviable. This is true in all the size groups of farms. The lack of interest in *kaipad* cultivation as reflected in the very high rates of current fallows is a consequence of such unviability. Since labour cost is the main determinant of the returns from *kaipad* cultivation, cultivation would appear viable only for those house-

Table 6 Cost and gross income of rice cultivation in *kaipad*

Size of <i>kaipad</i> holding (cents)	Area (cents)	Yield per acre (kg)	Value of yield per acre* (Rs)	Cost incurred per acre (Rs)
Less than 100	3893	594	5198	7886
101-250	3711	446	3903	5968
Above 250	1787	508	4445	5711
Total	9391	519	4541	6713

Note \* Valued at Rs 8 75 per kg paddy Estimate of cost includes the imputed value of family labour Value of output excludes the value of hay, since bulk of it is left in the *kaipad* land itself

holds which could deploy relatively greater inputs of family labour In fact, the existence of a lease market for *kaipad* land reflects this fact About 10 percent of the *kaipad* holdings were leased out by owners (who are in non-agricultural occupations) to agriculture labour households who depended primarily on cultivation for livelihood

While *kaipad* rice cultivation is becoming an unviable economic activity, the development of fish culture in rice fields has come as a relief to the cultivators As noted in the preceding section, leasing out paddy fields for fish culture on rent (*chemmeen panam*) has become a widespread practice in the study area According to our survey, all but nine of the 150 sample holders obtained *chemmeen panam* by leasing out their land (see Table 7) On an average, a holder received Rs 916 as *chemmeen panam* The amount varied from Rs 590 in the marginal holdings and Rs 945 in the small holdings to Rs 4,132 in the large holdings On a per-acre basis, the estimated lease amount among the sample farms amounts to Rs 822.

As owners of *kaipad* lands have been moving out of rice cultivation and keeping their lands fallow, there has been a spread of mangroves on the fallowed lands This spread of mangroves, leading to the growth of rodents and pests has negative effects on the yield rates of rice in the adjacent fields Therefore, fallowed lands lead to the fallowing of adjacent lands, too At the same time, mangroves provide ideal spawning ground for many species of shellfish and finfish exploited commercially Thus, the public interest in the conservation of mangroves, while being friendly towards fisheries is unfriendly to *kaipad* rice farming Conflicts in perceptions and decision-making arising from this situation are visible in Ezhome Once mangroves have grown in fallowed lands, cutting them



Table 7 Distribution of amount received by cultivators as share of shrimp filtration (*chemmeen panam*) according to size of holding

Size of holding (cents)	Number of holdings received	Total number of holdings	Average chemmeen panam (Rs)
0-100	97	106	590
101-250	34	34	945
Above 250	10	10	4132
All	141	150	916

down for rice farming becomes a costly proposition, and such attempts raise opposition from conservationists. All these factors cumulatively provide a congenial space for commercial aquaculture, promoted also by state agencies like Aquaculture Development Agency Kerala (ADAK)<sup>16</sup>. Those who invest in aquaculture are generally non-local entrepreneurs who are willing to pay much more than the prevailing land prices to grab the *kaipad* lands. These are people who divert their surpluses from urban business ventures like jewellery stores and bring in their own employees from other businesses to work as labourers and watchmen to guard against local poaching in these commercial fish farms.

Although such commercial farms are few in Ezhome now, in many adjacent villages many such farms have come up displacing local labour, causing great environmental degradation, taking away common fishing rights and altering the institutional arrangements surrounding the bunds and fishing and fish filtering. In the commercial farms permanent cement bunds are constructed and eggs from hatcheries are introduced after chemically cleansing the farm of all organisms. This chemical cleansing for prawn monoculture destroys many varieties of fish in the river, besides destroying the organisms in the farms. In some regions adjacent to Ezhome, such farms have created conflicts and tensions due to the displacement of local labour and protests from environmentalists against these farms. Such conflicts however, reinforce the power of the political parties and their negotiation role. However, since the owners of these farms are non-local people, the power of the local politicians may be compromised by the interventions from higher level, non-local political functionaries and/or leadership.

All these factors causing decline in *kaipad* cultivation have implications for the livelihood of labour households who are currently involved in this activity, since any reduction in cultivation may affect their

employment and earnings. Given this background, it is important to analyse the socioeconomic conditions of labour households, which we take up in the next section.

### Socioeconomic Conditions of Kaipad Labour Households

The socioeconomic conditions of *kaipad* labour households in Ezhome must be examined against the political mobilisation of workers and the struggles that had taken place for improvement in their employment and working conditions. We have noted earlier that the organised trade union movement among the workers helped them to obtain higher wages and improved conditions of work. Though political parties have very much influenced the labour in Ezhome, it is interesting that there are still other types of segregation among the labour households, especially in the relationship between labour and use of *kaipad* cultivation. Caste-based division of labour assumes significance in this context. Traditionally, the Pulaya community had more intense association with *kaipad* resources, as they depended on *kaipad* lands not merely for wage labour. They also fished in these waters for their subsistence with fishing contraptions they themselves could make from raw material freely available in their habitat. They also supplemented their diet with other plants and organisms in the *kaipad* fields. Women and the elderly could thus procure food at their leisure. This population also generated supplementary income from subsidiary occupations like mat-weaving and basket-making from screw pine leaves available in their neighbourhood, in the seasonal leisure allowed by the *kaipad* agricultural schedule. Thus, traditionally, they had a more intimate relation with *kaipad* than the labourers belonging to the intermediate caste, the Thiyya. Naturally, therefore, the decline in *kaipad* cultivation has left them vulnerable. It is equally true that the decisions of these scheduled caste labourers on whether to supply their labour to *kaipad* farming or not could contribute to its sustainability or otherwise. In a situation where labour becomes the critical constraint affecting the cultivation of *kaipad* lands and the fallowing of land could have consequences on the livelihood of labourers who depend on *kaipad* lands, an inquiry into the interrelated issues of labour costs continuing to be high and the labour supply to *kaipad* getting increasingly scarce would be revealing.

Agricultural labour households in Ezhome had benefited from land reforms since all of them got the ownership of their hutment dwelling. Our survey has shown that irrespective of caste, all the labour households got some land for dwelling, in some cases up to 50 cents. As

pointed out in some earlier studies, this has made the labour free from many conventional landowner-labour obligations (see Raj and Tharakan 1983). This, combined with the fact that the money and real wages of labour have been increasing, would have resulted in some improvement in the material and living conditions of the labour households. However, there has been no such improvement. Our survey shows that 64 percent of the households have only *kachha* houses and only 33 percent have *pucca* houses,<sup>17</sup> of these, 60 percent are not electrified, 64 percent have only firewood as cooking fuel, 64 percent have to depend on common wells or public taps for drinking water, and 16 percent have no latrine facility. While this picture is not very encouraging, as for educational attainments, the situation seems to be better in that about 40 percent of the population has educational attainment of secondary and above secondary levels.

The improved education is also indicative of the possibility of delay in the entry of the younger generation into the work force and a shift of labour force from agriculture to non-agriculture. The activity status of the population in the labour households supports this inference (see Table 8). About 30 percent of the population belongs to the category of

Table 8 Percentage of population in labour households according to activity status

Usual activity	Percentage of population		
	Male	Female	Total
A Working			
i) Agricultural labour	26.8	35.0	30.2
ii) Fishing/fish vending	7.1	5.0	6.0
iii) Casual labour	17.9	1.6	9.5
iv) Others	1.8	5.0	3.4
Subtotal (A)	56.6	46.6	49.1
B Employment seekers	3.6	1.8	1.7
C Outside the labour force			
i) Student	33.9	25.0	29.3
ii) Household affairs	-	16.6	8.6
iii) Too young/old	8.9	10.0	11.3
Subtotal (C)	46.4	53.4	50.9
D All	100.0	100.0	100.0
Sample size	56	60	116

students. It is also noted that the activity status of the working population is still dominated by agricultural labour with visible signs of a shift of the labour force to other occupations, especially as casual labour. The fact that the younger generation is uninterested in *kaipad* cultivation and in acquiring traditional farming skills is evident, 72 percent of the children of *kaipad* agricultural labourers expressed their disinclination in taking up this activity.

Since new entry into the agricultural labour force is shrinking, and the possibility of labour-saving mechanisation is difficult in *kaipad*, there is inevitable shortage of agricultural labourers in cultivation operations especially during the peak seasons. It also implies that the age distribution of agricultural labourers will be highly in favour of labourers in the higher age groups. Analysis of the data on the age distribution of agricultural labourers shows that 20 percent of the male and 26 percent of the female workers are above 60 years of age. It is also a reflection of the fact that the aged men and women work in the land since they have very little scope for acquisition of new skills and moving out to other occupations. For such people, clinging to *kaipad* is a matter of survival.

The employment and earnings estimate of *kaipad* workers revealed that the male workers obtained 41 percent of their employment from *kaipad* rice cultivation, 26 percent from other wage labour and the remaining from fishing in *kaipad* lands. In the case of female workers they obtained 47 percent of employment from the *kaipad* paddy, 37 percent from other wage labour and 16 percent from fishing (see Table 9). Thus, the dependence of the workers on the *kaipad* lands for their employment

Table 9 Average number of days of employment and earnings per worker during the last rice-fish year

Type of work	Estimated number of days of employment			Estimated earning (Rs)		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
<i>Kaipad</i> labour	18.8 (41.1)	19.3 (47.0)	19.0 (43.7)	1599 (46.9)	1074 (49.1)	1350 (47.7)
Other wage employment	11.9 (26.0)	15.3 (37.2)	13.5 (31.0)	1230 (36.0)	903 (41.3)	1075 (37.9)
Fishing	15.0 (32.9)	6.5 (15.8)	11.0 (25.3)	583 (17.1)	212 (9.6)	407 (14.4)
Total	45.7 (100.0)	41.1 (100.0)	43.5 (100.0)	3412 (100.0)	2189 (100.0)	2833 (100.0)

Note: Figures in parentheses are percentages.

appears to be very significant. Their dependence on this resource comes out much more sharply when we look at their average earnings from various *kaipad* related work and other types of wage labour. On an average the annual earnings of about 47 percent of the male workers are derived from *kaipad* labour as well as fishing related work. Female workers derived roughly 49 percent of their earnings by working as *kaipad* labour as well as fishing, and the rest from other wage employment. From the point of view of employment and earnings, *kaipad* resource remains important for the agricultural labour force in the study region. Its importance for the livelihood of the labour households is evident from the fact that *kaipad* related work accounts for a significant share of their household earnings.

As noted earlier, there are only a few new entrants to the *kaipad* labour force, and the existing labour belongs mostly to the higher age groups. Therefore, learning new skills and moving out to other occupations is, by and large, a difficult proposition for *kaipad* labour. This fact is reflected in the lack of occupational shifts in the labour force (see Table 10).

Table 10 Occupational shift of labour (sector wise)

Occupation when started work	Present occupation				
	Agricultural labour	Casual labour	Fishing and related activities	Others	All
Agricultural labour	33	2	1	1	37
Casual labour	3	9	1	-	13
Fishing and related activities	-	-	5	-	5
Others	-	-	-	2	2
All	36	11	7	3	57

Our findings show that conversion of *kaipad* wetlands, loss of common rights in fishing, destruction of screw pines and the fallowing of the *kaipad* lands adversely affects the livelihood of a segment of the labour households with limited alternative opportunities for employment and income generation. Women and the elderly from the labourer households belonging to the Pulaya community are particularly vulnerable due to their lesser mobility to search for new employment opportunities and

difficulties in learning new skills, besides the loss of their traditional means of subsistence and diet. As *kaipad* cultivation declines, so does the quality of life of these vulnerable sections of society.

### Conclusion

Although Ezhome region had witnessed several agrarian struggles to protect the rights of cultivators and agricultural labourers, resulting in the shaping of many institutional and organisational arrangements for the utilisation of wetland resources and equitable sharing of the output, these arrangements could not ensure sustained justice to all social groups, as the resource base itself has been eroding overtime and the political mediation could not effect any structural changes in agriculture. Local political leadership has failed to acknowledge the differential impact of the resource degradation and decline of *kaipad* cultivation on cultivators and labourers, the latter being more disadvantaged. In the process of change unleashed by the interaction between the factors external to the locality and those internal to the system, the social advances made through collective action to ensure justice for the deprived have received setbacks. The fact that under the existing provisions of the acts and rules governing decentralisation, local bodies have very little control over private land owners in preventing the unsustainable use of the land has not helped better local ecological management. Besides, penetration of the supra-local forces of commercialisation and globalisation into the local economy has created additional issues not easily resolvable, especially at the local level.

Effective collective action at the local level to counter the decline of *kaipad* cultivation and the resource base is far from easy, and far more difficult to sustain. Nevertheless, informed and legally empowered local governance would have to join hands with local leadership and capabilities to generate public discussion on the issue. Moving closer towards a consensus on how to check the decline of the ecologically-responsive *kaipad* cultivation is vital not just for eco-restoration, but also to protect the livelihoods of those people for whom much collective fervour had been expended at one time in Kerala's history.

### Notes

This is a modified version of a Discussion Paper brought out by the Kerala Research Programme on Local Level Development, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. We are grateful to Shri K V N Bhaskaran for conducting the field survey, and to the farmers of Ezhome and to the local leaders and political functionaries

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- 1 The raising of fish in paddy fields, either with rice or after the harvesting of the paddy, is an age-old practice. The system of fish culture varies depending on the ecological setting of the rice fields. However, it is carried out on a significant scale in the coastal wetlands than on the upland rice fields.
- 2 It is also interesting that such variations are also reflected in the names with which local communities identify this cultivation. For instance, in the central part of Kerala, it is called *pokkali*, whereas in northern part of the state, it is called *kaipad*.
- 3 According to the 1971 census, Ezhome had a population of 13 739, which rose to 18,555 in 1991. The scheduled caste/scheduled tribe population was 1,669 in 1971 and 1,709 in 1991. The total literacy rate increased from 55 percent in 1971 to 79 percent in 1991. The sex ratio in the village remained more or less constant 1 05 in 1971 and 1 07 in 1991. In 1971, 34 percent of the population was workers, which came down to 26 percent in 1991. There was a 40 percent decrease in the number of cultivators and agricultural labourers, whereas a threefold increase was noted in the number of construction workers between 1971 and 1991.
- 4 These bunds were originally constructed about 100 years back. Before that, rice cultivation was done under the natural ecosystem. The introduction of water control by constructing the bund may be considered as an important technological change in cultivation, since it has contributed not only to the reduction in risk and uncertainty in cultivation, but also to an improvement in cultivation methods. If such changes, introduced through water control systems, can be termed technological has been a subject of interesting discussion in Asian rice economies (see Bray 1986 Ch 4).
- 5 In his classic work on rice, Grist (1965) has cited the work of E K Menon, who had documented this practice as it prevailed in the erstwhile Travancore-Cochin area. Menon estimated the yield of fresh prawns per acre of rice field to be about 700-1900 lb (318-863 kg) per acre per season. In terms of dry weight, it was estimated to be around 160-295 lb (73-134 kg). In the 1950s, when Menon conducted the study, prawns were sold in dry form.
- 6 Their traditional method of fish trapping is called *thappal* and *therekkal*, meaning searching. They sit in knee-deep water with the neck just above the water surface and search for fish with both hands. The fish caught by bare hands are put into a basket locally known as *kuriya*, which they hold between their teeth. They also fish with traditional implements like *pedal* and *kothud*. Pulaya women are involved in *thappal* for collecting shrimps. Using *kothud* is another method of fish trapping. This fishing contraption is made of split reeds, open on both lower and upper parts. Stuck into the river bed, the fishes trapped within are removed by hand through the open upper portion.
- 7 They fished in the *kaipad* fields, canals and from the *mancha* using *pedal*, a cylindrical fish-trapping equipment made up of mid-ribs of coconut leaves. This technique was developed from their mat-making skill. It may be recalled that then the *kaipad* fields were a common-access property rice harvest.
- 8 Decision on leasing out is usually taken by the male owners representing the family among the group owners. They collectively decide and inform the locally residing owners to implement them. The local resident owners supervise the working of bunds for non-resident owners.
- 9 Earlier, fish filtration in the bund was done once a month during the summer seasons, from December to May, nowadays it is done in the monsoon also. The filtration

technique has also been modernised, from the traditional *pedal* has yielded to the nets. The fish filtration technique, now being practised, came into existence about forty years ago

- 10 It is to be noted that the quantity harvested varies according to the nature of the catchment area, nearness to the river, area inside the bund, etc. For instance, during the past three seasons the *chemmeen panam* declared for the *kaipad* farmers ranged from Rs 500 to Rs 800 per acre
- 11 Besides the KAC, the Communist Party of India (CPI) also has the leadership of some *karshaka sanghams* (farmers' unions) which control the *chemmeen kettu* process. Since the CPI does not have much public influence, unlike the CPI (M)-led KAC, it has less bargaining power in fixing the *chemmeen panam*, and it always follows the decisions taken by the KAC
- 12 There are seventeen bunds in Ezhome, big and small. Of these, the following twelve are important in terms of their income and the catchment area: Komath, Chootayam, Porathe Kai, Akathe Kai, Kannothe Kai, Potheyal, Kaniyante Kiam, Choolikal, Kannoom, Peringayil, Kotila, and Manpoya
- 13 This is a multi-purpose project that has among its aims saline water exclusion, flood control, navigation, communication, and reclamation. The engineering structure consists of (a) regulator-cum bridge, (b) a navigation lock over, and (c) an approach road of about 2 km length. The project when completed was expected to save 3,678 acres of land from salt water intrusion and floods. The first crop would be fully stabilised over the entire area. In certain areas, a second crop can also be raised by pumping water from the upstream side of the regulator. It is expected that about 1,000 acres of land can be reclaimed by canalising the river in later stages. The project, executed at a cost of Rs 5.8 million, was commissioned in 1966 (Government of Kerala 1972)
- 14 The commissioning of the project has contributed to changes in the ecology of the wet lands, and thereby to cultivation of *kaipad* rice and fish culture, inviting protests from civil society organisations. An evaluation of the project by the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad found that the project, besides failing to realise its objective of promoting rice cultivation, caused a reduction in the water level in the river due to low recharges in the watershed areas and curtailed the migration of anadromous fish from the sea to the river for spawning, resulting in the loss of fish production. Due to holes in the shutters, there is ingress of saline water to the upstream areas, making lift irrigation impossible and adversely affecting the water quality in the *kaipad* lands
- 15 During the pre-land reform period control on land in Ezhome vested with a few landlords. Consequent on land reforms, the former tenants who belonged mostly to the intermediate Thiyya caste and the Muslim community became owners of land. Presently about 75 percent of the land-owning households are Thiyyas and about 20 percent are Muslims, and only the remaining 5 percent belong to other Hindu castes. As for the size of holding, it is noted that 70 percent of the holdings are below 100 cents, and nearly 50 percent are below 50 cents, indicating the existence of many small and tiny holdings. At the upper extreme, only about 5 percent of the holdings are above 5 acres. Thus, a large degree of inequality exists in the distribution of land
- 16 The area under aquaculture in Kannur District (located mostly in the *kaipad* lands) is about 350 hectares. This accounts for about 10 percent of the area under aquaculture in the state. The agencies promoting this are ADAK, Brackish Water Fisheries Development Agency, and Marine Products Export Development Agency. For a description of the aquaculture practised in the area, see Nayak *et al.* (2000)
- 17 According to the definition of Census of India, *pucca* houses are houses that have walls made of burnt bricks, stone duly packed with lime or cement, cement concrete



or timber, etc and roofs made of tiles, galvanised corrugated iron sheets, asbestos cement sheets, reinforced brick concrete or cement concrete etc, and *kachha* houses are houses that have walls and roofs made of materials other than mentioned above, such as unburnt bricks, bamboo, mud, grass, reeds, thatch, etc or loosely packed stone, burnt bricks etc

## Annexure: The Survey

A statistical survey using probability sampling method was carried out to understand the existing socioeconomic situation in the area. The sample survey aimed at collecting data to provide information on the distribution of land holdings, area under dry land and wetland, cultivation practices, income and expenditure pattern of households, employment patterns of rural population, etc. The area selected consisted of two wards, namely, Chengala and Kottakil of Ezhome Panchayat, where *kaipad* cultivation is dominant.

Primary data were collected from households of *kaipad* cultivators and rural labourers. These households were categorised into three groups based on the main source of household income.

(i) *Kaipad* cultivators: Households owning *kaipad* land and receiving more than 50 percent of income from occupations other than agricultural labour and fishing. Among these there may be households not directly engaged in cultivation.

(ii) *Kaipad* labour households: Households in which more than 50 percent of income is from manual labour and any of its members is engaged in *kaipad* agriculture, fishing or any other activity related to *kaipad* resource base.

(iii) Other households: Households having occupations other than the above.

**House listing** To identify the different categories of households and to build a sample-frame, a quick enumeration of houses was carried out. In all there were 663 households in the two wards: *kaipad* cultivator households (12%), *kaipad* agriculture labour households (19%), and other households (69%). The target population for the survey consisted of *kaipad* cultivators and *kaipad* agriculture labourers. The number of households in this group was 399, with 113 in Chengala, and 164 in Kottakil.

**Sampling design** From the house listing it was found that there was wide variation in the size of *kaipad* land holdings. Therefore, a stratified sampling method was used for the survey. The households were first grouped as *kaipad* cultivator households and *kaipad* agricultural labour households. The *kaipad* cultivator households were further stratified based on the size of holding, and a 20 percent sample was selected from each stratum. However, in the largest holding size stratum, all households were included in the survey. From the *kaipad* agricultural labour households, a 20 percent sample was selected. The selection of households in all the strata was done by the method of systematic sampling. Separate interview schedules were used for canvassing data from *kaipad* cultivators and rural agriculture labour/fisherfolk households.

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# Is Kerala Becoming a Knowledge Society? - Evidence from the Scientific Community

*R. Sooryamoorthy and Wesley Shrum*

*When knowledge becomes the key for progress and development, its generation assumes great significance. Who generates it and how it is done become important issues, and particularly so in developing societies. Using data from a longitudinal study of 404 scientists in Kerala collected in 1994 and 2000, this paper attempts to understand the players and the system of knowledge generation. It focuses on changes in the personal characteristics of the researchers, their professional activities, and their productivity during this period.*

## Introduction

Knowledge has become a buzzword in modern societies, dominating both capital and labour. A modern society was, until recently, perceived in terms of property and labour, while a capitalist society was viewed as a society of owners and non-owners. Soon it became a labouring society, and now it is forming into a knowledge society (Stehr 2001: 495). The link between knowledge and development is becoming ever more pronounced. Knowledge is the ability to transform our resources to our advantage, and it has become the most important factor determining our standard of life, more than land, tools or labour (World Bank 1998-99: 16). Today, most technologically advanced economies are knowledge based. Not only do they generate new wealth from their innovations, but they also create vast numbers of knowledge-related jobs (*Ibid*). As a consequence, societies are now being transformed into what many theorists have viewed as true knowledge societies (Lane 1966, Drucker 1969, Bell 1973).<sup>1</sup> The emergence of knowledge societies, however, is not a spontaneous event but a gradual process in which societies acquire new traits and features. Knowledge has become more fundamental and strategic for most spheres of life and it is modifying, or even replacing, the factors that have been constitutive of social action (Stehr 2001: 496).

India has one of the five largest scientific communities in the world, and accounts for about half the scientific production of the developing countries as a whole (Gaillard *et al* 1997: 41). The developing countries together represent only 7 percent of the world's mainstream scientific

output, of which close to 80 percent is produced in Asia India's mainstream production has increased at about the same pace as the total world output during 1985-92

Given that knowledge is becoming the basis of growth and development, this paper examines the institutional settings of knowledge creation in a small but widely acclaimed State of Kerala Kerala is regarded as a model of development, though the initial euphoria about its achievements and credentials in several socioeconomic and demographic spheres is on the wane The setting has significance for two reasons First, Kerala has initiated many programmes, following the footprints of many other southern states like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, to chart a new path for its development by taking advantage of the demand for information technology (IT) the world over Its new IT policy document makes it clear that the growth of the state in the coming years will be increasingly driven by the knowledge and service-based sectors where information flow will be a key determinant of success (Government of Kerala 2001: 5)<sup>2</sup>

When knowledge is the key for progress and development, its generation and the structures that facilitate or hinder the process become important Added to this is the socioeconomic ambience that stems from the process of globalisation Scientific and technical knowledge produces incremental capacities for social and economic action or an increase in the ability to 'how-to-do-it' (Stehr 2001: 498) This study focuses on the people who have been involved in the generation of knowledge in Kerala Based on a study, first conducted in 1994, then repeated in 2000, in the teaching and research sectors, we trace the changes that have occurred at the individual and system levels, and examine how these changes affect the research system in Kerala

### **Methodology**

Kerala was one of the three locations, along with Kenya and Ghana, in which the original field survey of scientists was conducted in 1994 A team of three interviewers spent five weeks travelling through the state conducting approximately 100 interviews in universities, research institutes and a few NGOs The primary basis for selecting organisations in the academic and government research sectors was publication productivity The individuals interviewed were all involved in some aspect of research on agricultural, environmental, and natural resource issues First, a search of seventy-nine databases was carried out using the DIALOG system<sup>3</sup> After discarding sources in irrelevant fields and those

with few hits, seventeen international databases were searched for the 1992-93 period. This allowed the identification of a group of organisations and scientists before the fieldwork began. The sample was stratified by sector, focusing primarily on university departments and national research institutes, interviewing approximately three individuals in each institution. Fifty-seven percent of our 1994-respondents belonged to national institutes, 31 percent to universities, and 12 percent to NGOs. These individuals represent forty-nine organisations in three sectors, including twenty-two government institutes, twenty university departments and seven NGOs. Obtaining the permission and cooperation from the director/head of each organisation, we targeted mid-career researchers. We sought to divide our interviews between those whose names appeared in the international databases and those whose did not. A special effort was made to interview women researchers.<sup>4</sup>

The second set of respondents was contacted during three months beginning from June 2000. While the 1994 survey sought to be comprehensive in its coverage of agricultural, environmental, and natural resource-related research institutions in the state, because of time and cost constraints, few individuals could be interviewed in each. In the 2000 survey we decided to attempt to increase the sample size. Hence, the 2000 survey sought comprehensiveness in the number of individual scientists interviewed within each university department or research institute, with less coverage of the full range of organisations in 1994. The respondents were drawn from the main central and state government research organisations in Thiruvananthapuram (the state capital) and the science departments of the University of Kerala and the College of Agriculture in Vellayani. The focus, as in 1994, was on fields of specialisation in agriculture, biology, biochemistry, geology, mathematics, physics and social sciences. Thus, we have a total of 404 respondents—101 from the 1994 survey and 303 from the 2000 survey.

This paper looks at the transformation of the research community from 1994 to 2000. In the tables that follow, we examine the realms of personal and academic background of the researchers, their professional life and productivity, and the research facilities available to them. The 2000 survey contained a variety of new questions on the Internet, a subject that was only beginning to capture the attention of the Kerala research community in 1994. However, the analysis here is confined to items that appear in both the surveys. The survey instrument included both structured and unstructured items on the major dimensions of professional research activities, international and national organisational contacts, frequency of discussions with various groups, supervisory roles

and local contacts, professional memberships and activities, self-reported productivity, attitudes on agricultural and environmental issues, and the needs of the research system

### **Demographic and Socioeconomic Background**

In the sample 37 percent (150 respondents) were women (36.6 percent in 1994 and 37.3 percent in 2000). The even distribution indicates that there is no significant change in gender composition between the two periods. Although the ratio of women to men in Kerala is in favour of women (1058/1000), it is not reflected in the professional positions of women in the chosen institutions of higher learning and research. Such a gender imbalance in the academic hierarchy has also been reported in a recent empirical study (Kumar 2001). In the mean age of the respondents, there is a statistically significant difference of four years, indicating that the research community is ageing (Table 1). Father's occupation, which gives an indication of the socioeconomic background of the respondents, shows some significant changes between the two periods. Ever more children of civil servants are being attracted to the field of research and teaching whereas in 1994 only 13.7 percent of the scientists were children of civil servants, in 2000 this figure had risen to 43 percent. At the same time, as evident from the data for 2000, respondents with farm origins had declined by nearly 10 percentage points. There are also fewer respondents in the 2000 data whose parents who are in the medical/nursing profession. Single respondents were four times higher in the 1994 sample, probably indicating a higher experience profile of the personnel in the research and teaching systems of Kerala. This finding is consistent with the data on age in which the mean difference is notably higher for the second set of data.

In recent times, the spouses of respondents are more likely to be civil servants, or those in the educational or medical fields. The increase in spouses in the teaching profession owes primarily to the fact that the male respondents are likely to have wives from this profession. It implies that female respondents who are scientists, researchers and professors do not prefer to marry teachers or those in allied fields. In the present hierarchy of occupations in the state, teachers in schools fall below scientists, researchers and professors. In Kerala, women are generally encouraged to marry men from higher occupational status. In accordance with such a preference, 40.5 percent of the female respondents in the second survey have husbands who are civil servants holding regular and

Table 1 Characteristics of respondents

Variable	1994	2000	N
1 Percentage male	63.4	62.7	404
2 Percentage female	36.6	37.3	404
3 Age*** <sup>b</sup>	43.0	47.04	404
4 Father's occupation*** <sup>a</sup>			397
Farmer/Peasant	33.7	23.2	
Teacher/Education	11.6	12.9	
Civil Servant	13.7	43.0	
Medical/Nurse	5.3	1.7	
Researcher/Professor/Scientist	3.2	3.6	
Business/Merchant/Shopkeeper	11.6	8.9	
Others	21.1	6.6	
5 Marital status*** <sup>a</sup>			404
Single	8.9	2.0	
Married	90.1	97.4	
Widowed	1.0	0.7	
6 Spouse's occupation*** <sup>a</sup>			386
Farmer/Peasant	0.0	0.7	
Teacher/Education	6.6	10.2	
Civil Servant	8.8	27.1	
Medical/Nurse	3.3	5.8	
Researcher/Professor/Scientist	29.7	16.6	
Extension officer	0.0	1.4	
Business/Merchant/Shopkeeper	5.5	2.4	
Housewife	33.0	26.1	
Others	13.2	9.8	
7 Education <sup>a</sup>			404
PhD	77.2	77.2	
Masters	21.8	19.8	
Bachelors	0.0	0.3	
Diploma	0.0	0.3	
Others	1.0	2.3	
8 Year of joining the organisation <sup>b</sup>	1981	1982	404
9 Year of obtaining highest degree* <sup>b</sup>	1983	1986	404
10 Degree from developed countries <sup>a</sup>	6.9	5.3	404
11 Years spent outside India for higher education <sup>b</sup>	0.53	0.32	404
12 Years spent in developed country <sup>b</sup>	0.6	0.4	404

\* $p < 1$ , \*\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , 'a' In percentage, tested with Chi-square, 'b' Results of t-test

permanent positions in the governmental sector, compared with 19 per cent wives for the male respondents

To further substantiate this argument, fewer women (only 5.4 per cent in 2000) have husbands who are in business or are working as merchants or shopkeepers. Parenthetically we may note that men too do not prefer women in such occupations (the percentage of wives in the said occupations is less than one). Employed men like scientists, researchers and professors also opt for partners in the regular, secured positions that bring in a steady income, cementing their position firmly in the higher stratum of the society. The percentage of respondents' wives who are housewives, that is, those who are not gainfully employed, registers a drop from 33.0 in 1994 to 26.1 in 2000, indicating that more employed men are choosing employed women as their life partners.

In both sets of data, over three-quarters (77.2 per cent) of the respondents possessed PhD as their highest degree, but this indicates no advancement in the present system in terms of educational qualifications. There is even a drop of two percentage points in Master's level qualification, with the difference being qualifications such as MPhil. However, this difference is small. As for educational credentials, the research capacity of Kerala has not improved since 1994.

As for the year of obtaining the highest degree such as MA, MPhil or PhD, the sample means show significant difference in terms of the t-test. This does not make much sense as there are several other variables that might intervene here. In view of the present rate and extent of unemployment, the year of obtaining a position varies.<sup>5</sup> This reflects the difficulty of finding employment as soon as one obtains educational qualifications. It is also common to pursue a higher degree (such as MPhil or PhD) after one has taken up employment—a prerequisite to climb the career ladder. For a majority, acquiring higher degrees while in employment is for promotion within the organisation and owes little to academic interests. It is quite evident among the teaching community—not only in Kerala but in many other states as well—that there are teachers who undertake their doctoral study while close to retirement, as this is essential for promotions to higher levels. At the time of data collection in 1994, such degrees were not essential for even research positions in Kerala. Now higher qualifications like PhD are common because there is a sufficient supply of eligible candidates in the labour market. Although these qualifications are not mandatory even today, preference is given to candidates who possess higher qualifications.



Most respondents (over 90 percent in both years) do not have any degree from any developed country. For those that do, most were obtained from the USA, the UK and other European countries (more from the USA among the 2000 respondents). However, the difference between the two data sets is not statistically significant. Among those who obtained higher education in developed countries, the average number of years spent outside the country was greater in 1994 than in 2000, indicating that Kerala scientists have, if anything, become less cosmopolitan over time. Though statistically insignificant, this indicates that fewer scientists in the Kerala research system have the opportunity for education outside the country. It seems clear that in the competitive environment, opportunities in the form of fellowships and study grants have not improved during the period of the study, if anything, they are shrinking.

### **Professional Activities**

For those in the research sector, the most significant role partners within the employing organisation are other scientists and engineers, technicians and field workers, and other non-technical staff. The first six rows of Table 2 may indicate a general reduction in supervisory and collaborative relationships over time for intra-organisational relations. While there is a small difference in the number of professionals supervised, the number of technicians, fieldworkers, and non-technical staff has declined. The reduction in intra-organisational relationships is shown most clearly in rows 3 through 6 of Table 2, based on a series of questions on the number of individuals of various types within her/his own organisation with whom the respondent works closely. We interpret these items as indicators of collaboration within the organisation or academic department of the respondents. Clearly, the number of collaborators is lower in 2000 than it was in 1994. For scientific collaborators, as row 4 of Table 2 shows, the reduction is remarkable (8.63 to 3.23), a nearly two-thirds drop. There are significant reductions as well in the number of technical and non-technical collaborators at less than professional rank (rows 5-6). If this is viewed as a measure of the extent to which researchers discuss research problems with other professionals, and the extent to which they are assisted in their research by non-professionals, then the reduction in research capacity is indeed puzzling, if not disturbing.

Since 1920, when the Indian Botanical Association was formed, the number of professional scientific associations in India has increased. By

Table 2 Professional activities

Variable	1994	2000	N
1 Professionals (scientist/engineer) supervised <sup>b</sup>	1 5	1 29	401
2 Technicians and fieldworkers supervised <sup>b</sup>	3 14	1 93	402
3 Non-technical staff supervised <sup>**b</sup>	1 33	0 70	402
4 Professionals (scientist/engineer) collaborators <sup>***b</sup>	8 63	3 23	402
5 Technicians and fieldworkers collaborators <sup>***b</sup>	4 99	1 73	402
6 Non-technical staff collaborators <sup>***b</sup>	4 59	0 38	401
7 Membership in professional association <sup>a</sup>	83 7	88 4	401
8 Held office in professional association <sup>a</sup>	46 9	44 9	401
9 Served on the editorial board of professional journals <sup>a</sup>	29 6	31 4	401
10 Member of government committees or advisory group <sup>***a</sup>	23 5	53 5	401
11 Served as a consultant <sup>a</sup>	56 1	67 0	401
12 Advisor to extension services <sup>a</sup>	55 1	52 5	401
13 Advisor to an NGO <sup>a</sup>	28 9	28 4	401
14 Training courses attended <sup>a</sup>	67 3	68 0	401
15 Professional meetings attended <sup>b</sup>	9 91	12 52	389
16 Professional advisor to NGOs <sup>a</sup>	28 9	28 4	400
17 Days away from organisation for professional activities <sup>b</sup>	30 1	22 15	388
18 Professional awards received <sup>a</sup>	25 5	22 5	398

\* $p < .1$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$ , 'a' In percentage, tested with Chi-square, 'b' Results of t-test

1940 there were about seventeen such professional associations in the country (Krishna 1997: 239).<sup>6</sup> Memberships in such associations can facilitate the exchange of ideas and communication among scientific professionals and help them keep abreast of developments in their research fields. A large majority (over 80 percent) of our respondents in both the surveys, with only a minor change, reported membership in

professional associations<sup>7</sup> Sometimes a keen interest in the discipline and specialisation motivates a scientist to become involved in professional organisations Active involvement in an association and contributions to it increases the chance of rising to positions of responsibility Such positions also indicate expertise and reputation as a researcher, factors that weigh heavily in the selection of persons for responsible positions in associations As indicated in row 8 of Table 2, fewer than half were officers of such organisations, and this percentage fell slightly in 2000

India produces more than half the scientific journals published in the Third World In science and technology alone, there are 1,500 journals published in India (Krishnan and Viswanathan 1987, as quoted in Krishna 1997: 255) Scientific professionals may be involved in the publication process in various ways, including the editorial and peer-review activities of journals This typically occurs once they have an established standing in their own field of research Such an acceptance and recognition can be achieved only after years of research in a specific area of interest Peer review is intended to control the quality of the contributions in the discipline, by collegial review of published problems, techniques and results As indicated in row 9 of Table 2, slightly less than one-third of our respondents had, during the past five years, served on the editorial boards of professional journals The trends in these positional variables for professional associations and journals do not indicate an improving condition for Kerala research system

The policy roles of these individuals have improved significantly, however A majority of the respondents in 2000 reported serving on government committees or advisory groups, bodies that play an important part in the formulation of policies, which represents more than double the percentage in 1994 There was also a significant increase in consultancy, from about half the scientists in 1994 to nearly two-thirds in 2000 Since their roles as advisors of extension services and NGOs did not change (rows 12 and 13 of Table 2), we can say that Kerala scientists are engaging more with governmental and international agencies than in the recent past This is not because of any decrease in the number of NGOs in the state since 1994, or the number of opportunities<sup>8</sup> But such services are often rendered voluntarily rather than for a charge Consultancy services to NGOs and taking part in advisory roles in NGOs are not as lucrative as consultancy work for governmental and international agencies

Finally, data on participation in training courses and on the number of days of remaining away from the organisation for professional

activities during the last five years do not augur well for the scientific community in Kerala. The percentage of the respondents who had gone for any professional course or training registered a negligible change in 2000 (row 14 of Table 2). Moreover, the average number of days the respondents spent away from the organisation for professional activities had declined considerably (row 17 of Table 2).

### Research and Productivity

The expenditure on research and development (R&D) in India, in terms of its proportion to the GNP, increased after 1975. This is conspicuous when it is compared with the proportion among other developing countries. However, since the 1990s the trend is reversed. The R&D funding in India fell from 0.92 percent of the GNP in 1990 to 0.70 percent in 2000 (Krishna, 2002: 10). This may be compared with the figures of 2 to 3 percent for the industrialised countries and 1.5 to 2.5 percent for East Asia. As indicated by the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI), a widely used bibliometric data source, ten countries produce more than 80 percent of international scientific literature.<sup>9</sup> The output of research papers produced varies from country to country. Developed countries such as the USA, the UK, Japan, Germany, France, Canada and the Netherlands accounted for a range of 1.68 to 36.67 percent of the total world output during 1981-85 (Braun *et al.*, quoted in Krishna 1997: 253). The range for developing countries such as Brazil, Egypt, Nigeria, Kenya, Thailand and Algeria was from 0.37 to 0.01 percent. Among them, all except India are the members of the industrialised world. India, though a developing country, falls somewhere in the middle with an output of 2.68 percent during the said period. India has maintained its eighth place among publishing nations since the beginning of the 1970s (Gaillard *et al.* 1997: 43), above Italy, Australia, and the Netherlands, Sweden and other European countries. It accounts for about 64 percent of the total scientific output of the Third World (*Ibid.*)

At the individual level too, the productivity of scientists is measured on the basis of their scientific output. This can be assessed in terms of the research projects conducted or directed, contributions to national and international journals, research papers in edited volumes, and the production of monographs, reports and bulletins. Not only written output, but contributions to national and international conferences are an expression of one's productivity. As Table 3 shows, our respondents report working an average of fifty hours a week, fewer in 2000 than in 1994. However, the time investment in research is virtually the same in

Table 3 Productivity of respondents

Variable	1994	2000	N
1 Hours worked per week <sup>b</sup>	51 61	49 96	399
2 Hours devoted to research per week <sup>b</sup>	30 93	30 93	398
3 Number of research projects*** <sup>b</sup>	3 79	7 20	401
4 Number of research projects directed* <sup>b</sup>	2 20	3 57	401
5 Articles in foreign journals <sup>b</sup>	2 27	2 21	399
6 Articles in national journals <sup>b</sup>	5 24	4 90	398
7 Chapters in edited volumes	0 70	0 86	398
8 Reports/monographs produced <sup>b</sup>	3 30	3 79	392
9 Bulletins for extension <sup>b</sup>	1 31	1 10	400
10 Papers presented at international conferences/workshops/seminars <sup>b</sup>	2 11	1 78	400
11 Papers presented at national conferences/workshops/seminars <sup>b</sup>	5 65	6 31	400

\* $p < 1$ , \*\* $p < 05$ , \*\*\* $p < 01$ , 'b' Results of t-test

both periods. The number of research projects in which the respondents were involved and the number of projects directed is another indicator of research activity. Respondents reported significantly more research projects in 2000 than in 1994, by a margin of 7.2 to 3.8 (row 3 of Table 3). However, part of this difference is accounted for by the greater range of responses in 2000 (from 16 in 1994 to 60 in 2000).

The survey contained a series of ten 'written output' questions asking respondents to report their own productivity within the past five years. The most salient items pertained to articles in both foreign and national journals. We used self-reported publication data because of the absence of good bibliometric sources covering India. Publications are highly relevant for researchers in developing countries, and generally they have little difficulty in remembering them. However, there was no further check on the accuracy of these self-reported publications.<sup>10</sup>

Table 3 shows little change in the primary types of research output. The contributions of the respondents to national and foreign journals, edited volumes, and the production of monographs, reports and bulletins

do not show positive signs of change between the two periods. Compared with 1994, self-reported contributions to foreign journals and national journals have declined. While there is a minor increase in the production of reports and contributions to edited titles, this is negligible.<sup>11</sup> Such outputs are not treated on par with contributions to peer-reviewed journals. Most often, reports and monographs may be converted into publishable forms in journals after considerable intellectual inputs are added. Likewise, the present level of participation in national and international conferences, meetings, workshops and seminars is not encouraging for the growth of research activities in the state. The rate of presentation of papers at international meetings has dwindled in recent years, while there is a positive change in the case of national meetings. These changes are not statistically significant.

### Conclusion

This study examines scientists in Kerala from 1994 to 2000, focusing on stability and change in their personal characteristics, professional activities and academic output. As for the composition of the research system, some transformation is evident, including the aging of the Kerala scientific community and the class background of these professionals. Furthermore, research and teaching have become the preferred professions of the wards of the middle-class parents in the state. This class character is maintained and reinforced in the choice of life partners too.

As for positive changes in the system, we found increased participation in policy-making bodies, a welcome trend that may pave the way for the integration of scientific knowledge in programmes and policies that affect the society. Moreover, there is some indication of an increase in the number of research projects. However, we are unsure whether the interpretation of this shift should be positive, and find little else to suggest the occurrence of improvements in the scientific system. Most characteristics examined showed little change, including such important indicators as the proportion of scientists with doctoral degrees and the relative absence of professional training abroad. In comparison with the 1994-respondents, the time dedicated to research has declined. While the number of reported research projects has increased, the number of contributions by the respondents to national and foreign journals has declined in recent years, and so has participation in national and international meetings. The slight decrease in participation on the editorial boards of professional journals may also be a matter of concern.

One of our most puzzling findings is the reduction in the magnitude of interaction and intellectual exchange, indicated in our data on the number of collaborators within the local organisation. Does this indicate that the scientists, researchers and professors in the state are confining themselves to their own academic islands or working on private projects, with declining interaction with the scientific fraternity? Perhaps the feeling for working closely with those in one's own organisation also involves the competencies of these colleagues, who can be sought for clarifying thoughts and establishing productive research directions. The availability of such people may be a factor enhancing or reducing collaborative relationships among the researchers and teachers within an organisation.

This pattern may be read in the context of the increase in consultancies, since such work is accomplished without subsequent published output. The low pay of many teachers and scientists and lack of encouragement accorded to these activities may be reducing their interest in research. Other data (not discussed here) indicate a substantial increase in concern about the conditions for research, particularly in matters of pay and perquisites. The organisational approach to reward and recognition has a significant impact on commitment of the scientific community to rigorous research activities. Though the current research scenario in Kerala may be better than that in some northern states of the country, individuals who are dedicated, considering research as a *tapasya*, are few and in need of encouragement.<sup>12</sup>

In this respect the current work suggests problems in the research system as it exists in India as a whole. India is the third largest country in the world in terms of human resources in science and technology (Krishna 1997: 263). The feeling that the system is now facing a crisis is strengthening. Partly, the research system is unable to attract the best talent. Prospective students are wooed by career-oriented disciplines such as management, administration, engineering and IT, while pure science does not appeal strongly enough to the talented (Krishna 2002: 10). Our results show that there is little improvement and much cause for concern regarding the state of the research system in Kerala.

## Notes

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- 1 The term 'knowledge society' came into being in the 1960s. Robert Lane used it for the first time, and Peter Drucker employed it very specifically. Daniel Bell, too, used this concept widely in the 1970s.
- 2 The preamble of the IT Industry Policy of the Government of Kerala states that it will evolve a strategy to harness the opportunities offered by IT for the comprehensive social and economic development of the state. This strategy is to serve as a primary instrument for facilitating Kerala's emergence as a leading knowledge society in the region. The Government of India, too, in its IT Action Plan, makes it clear that IT is an agent of transformation of every facet of human life that will bring about a knowledge-based society in the twenty-first century.
- 3 DIALOG is the database of DIALOG Corporation in the USA.
- 4 Owing to the method used for obtaining the interviews, calculating a standard response rate was difficult. In 1994, we sought to conduct interviews in most of the significant government research organisations in the state and at all university departments engaged in agricultural or environmental research. One difference between the 1994 survey and the 2000 survey was the inclusion of a small number of NGO respondents in the former.
- 5 There were 4.186 million unemployed people registered in the Employment Exchanges in Kerala in 2000. Among them about 75 percent had educational qualifications of school final and above. More than half (55.27 percent) of these are women.
- 6 There were societies and organisations of this kind before 1920—Aligarh Scientific Society (1864), Bihar Scientific Society (1868), Punjab Science Institute (1886), the Dawn Society (1904), Indian Science Congress Association (1914), and the Association of Scientific and Industrial Organisation (1904). However, the Indian Botanical Association marked the professionalisation of science in India (Krishna 1997: 275).
- 7 Professional activities cover a period of five years before the data were collected in 1994 and 2000.
- 8 In fact, the number of NGOs is growing every year. A rough estimate shows that there is at least one NGO in each of the 991 panchayats in Kerala.
- 9 Gaillard *et al.* (1997) note that international scientific databases are highly selective, and bibliometric studies based on these data represent only a small proportion of the world's science. This applies to the data compiled by the Institute for Scientific Information, though this is the most widely used bibliographical database.
- 10 One objection to using self-reports is that they are based on memory, but the alternative is to use *curricula vitae*, which are often unavailable or outdated.
- 11 In this respect, the history of India is interesting. For instance, Krishna (1997) notes that, during 1836-95, India could publish only eighteen papers in the journal of the Asiatic Society, but within the next 25 years the Indian output was 350 papers.
- 12 This was the observation made by the famous scientist Professor Jayanth Vishnu Narlikar in an interview (see Harikumar 2002: 4).

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## Development and Social Mobility among the Lahulis of Himachal Pradesh

*Ajai Kumar*

*This paper examines the dynamics of development and social mobility of the Lahuli community of Himachal Pradesh. It focuses on the efforts made by the Lahulis to move up in the social ladder despite tough ecological conditions. It argues that the Lahulis have made strides in development not because they were strategically placed in the social structure to garner the benefits of development. They have experienced development and upward social mobility primarily due to their peculiar community structure, committed leadership and co-operative participation in development.*

The Lahulis inhabit the tribal district of Lahul and Spiti of Himachal Pradesh (Mamgain 1976). Geographically, this district is the largest in Himachal Pradesh, accounting for 24.85 percent of the state's area. It is inhabited by 31,294 persons, and the density of population is two persons per sq. km compared with ninety-three persons per sq. km for the state (Census of India 1991). The Lahulis were accorded the tribal status after independence, considering their socioeconomic backwardness and the tough geo-climatic conditions of the region—which, due to heavy snowfall, remains cut off from the rest of the world for more than six months in a year—they inhabit. This paper<sup>1</sup> examines the development experience of and social mobility among the Lahulis.

Economic development in the Lahul region can be classified into three distinct phases: (i) the *kuth*<sup>2</sup> phase, beginning in the 1950s and running through the 1960s, (ii) the potato phase, starting in the mid-1960s, maturing in the 1970s and still continuing, and (iii) the peas phase, combined with *hops*<sup>3</sup> and other cash crops, beginning in the 1980s and continuing along with other phases of development. The enterprising people of Lahul have a history of adventure in trade and business. For centuries, these people traded with western Tibet, Yarkand, Ladakh and Kullu. The centuries' old trade ceased in 1962 after the Indo-China war. The cessation of this trade, however, did not upset the economy of the Lahulis. They had their lands to fall back upon, and a new phase of development of progressive agriculture began in this region with the

introduction of different cash crops. During the post-independence period, the development activities in this region through state intervention not only boosted the local economy but also brought significant transformation in the social and cultural life of the people. In the expanding phases of development several people have moved out of Lahul for higher education, jobs, business and for diverse other economic activities.

### **Development and Upward Social Mobility**

The economic status of the Lahulis was very low in the pre-independence period. There was no source of regular income for most of the people, as the economy was of subsistence nature. Only a few of the Lahulis were engaged in traditional trade by moving out of their region to different places like Ladakh, western Tibet, Kullu, Mandi, etc. Narrating the poverty and hardships of that period, Sh. CS,<sup>4</sup> now 75 years old, settled in a village at Kullu, said:

It was a situation of extreme poverty at the native place. Only one crop could be grown in summer spanning for four months and life used to remain crippled during the whole winter period for about six to seven months. Heavy snowfall restricted mobility, and it was risky to move out due to the fear of sliding glaciers and avalanches. Every family had to store food grains, fuel and fodder for the long winter. Soil in the fields remained under thick cover of snow. People from each village and family had to move out of the region every year to earn a livelihood. My father worked as a labourer at different places in Kullu for many years. I also started visiting Kullu with my father since 1940 and worked as a labourer. We used to stay for the entire winter at Kullu, returning to native place in summer. This practice continued for many years.

The only source of income for some people was the centuries old trade in wool, cashmere and herbs. However, this trade was stagnant in nature. Commenting on the condition of these traders then, Sahnî, a native of Lahul, writes:

Although these people were involved in this trade for generations, their economic condition hardly ever improved. The journey to Tibet was a horrible experience. During more than a month's journey they rarely had a decent meal. They slept outdoor among the sheep and the ponies. They could not even take bath for days together (1994).

There was all-pervasive poverty, illiteracy and ignorance in Lahul during the colonial period. Living conditions became harsher still due to the inhospitable climatic conditions and tough ecological setting. The mighty Rohtang Pass (3975 metres above the mean seal level) restricted all types of mobility for six or seven months in a year due to heavy snowfall. Most Lahulis moved to Kullu during winter to earn their livelihood, mobility was used as a survival strategy to face the challenges of life. Sh. ND, now 72 years old, settled in village Parganu near Bhuntar town since 1972, said

My father was the first mover in the family to migrate to Kullu in 1930s to work as a labourer. Poverty at native place forced him to move to Kullu to earn a livelihood. Life at native place was very tough and only one crop could be grown in a year. Food production from the single crop was not enough to feed the entire family for the whole year and somebody in the family had to move out for alternative sources of income. Usually young and physically fit members of the family used to shift to Kullu to work as manual labourers in the fields or in house- and road-construction work.

It was only after independence that the process of development was initiated in earnest in Lahul. Soon after attaining freedom, a struggle for the development of Lahul was started by some enlightened Lahulis who provided leadership to their poverty-stricken community. Two young men of Lahul, Thakur Devi Singh and Thakur Shiv Chand, the first graduates of Lahul from Lahore in 1944, came forward to dedicate themselves to the service and upliftment of their community. They started organising the members of their community by creating awareness among them to stand united to safeguard their common interests. They received active cooperation from other awakened members of their community. Keeping in view the social backwardness and extremely harsh economic conditions in an ecologically difficult setting, a demand was made for tribal status for Lahul and Spiti under the provisions of the Constitution of India. The Lahul-Spiti People's Association was formed in 1947 to organise the people and to protect the common interests of the community. A delegation of Lahulis headed by Thakur Devi Singh and Thakur Shiv Chand left for Delhi in May 1948 to meet the then Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The members of the delegation impressed upon the Prime Minister the need for granting tribal status for the people of Lahul and Spiti, keeping in view the extreme poverty and social backwardness of the region (Thakur 1994).

Lahul and Spiti were declared as a tribal area, after a long struggle, in 1952. A Tribal Advisory Council was formed soon to speed up the

development of the valley. Securing the tribal status was a big achievement for the people of Lahul and Spiti. It brought them the benefits of reservation in government jobs and educational institutions. Special funds from the central and state governments started flowing in for the development of the area under the Five Years Plans and tribal sub-plan strategy of development. Scholarships, subsidies and other benefits were made available to the people of the region.

The 1950s and 1960s witnessed a new phase of development in Lahul. *Kuth* cultivation, which was started in the mid-1930s, also matured during this period and the Kuth Society was formed in 1959 for marketing *kuth*. The formation of Kuth Society saved the growers from the exploitation of middlemen who used to fleece them. The *kuth* cultivation helped the Lahulis to send their children out for higher education. Benefits of reservation under the protective discrimination policy made it easier for the Lahulis to seek admission in educational institutions and, subsequently, to compete for government jobs. In view of these provisions and improved educational status during the 1950s and 1960s, many young men from Lahul made their entry into civil services, and medical, engineering and veterinary professions and host of other services. Lahul produced its first IAS officer in 1964, as also a doctor and an engineer around this time. Some even went abroad for higher education. Conceding the contribution of *kuth* in his education, Sh. D.S., now 67 years old, a retired civil servant, settled in Kullu, said:

I did my matric from high school, Kullu in 1952. I completed my MA from Panjab University, Hoshiarpur in 1958. Students from Lahul were aware of the hardships at the native place. They knew that they had come from very difficult socioeconomic conditions and their families had high expectations from them to become something. They had scarce resources at native place to depend upon. So, every student from Lahul used to work very hard. My family could send me for education due to the earnings from *kuth* which was cultivated by the family.

Much enthusiasm for education was generated in the 1950s and 1960s, and a competitive environment prevailed among the young scholars from Lahul. Even those who had no source of income and no assured help from their family for higher education strived hard to achieve their goal despite adverse financial conditions, and made a place for themselves based on their own efforts and sheer hard work. Sh. Q.T., now 57 years old, a college principal, settled in Kullu, said:

I came to Kullu in 1954 for education. Economic condition of the family was very poor. It was very difficult to make both ends meet. Parents, due to extremely poor economic conditions, were not in a position to bear the cost of my education, but I had a strong desire to go for higher education. I joined a college in Kapurthala for my education. To bear the cost of my education and living there I worked at Kapurthala railway station. The help received from parents was very meagre and rare.

The 1960s was also the phase of development of the infrastructure. The pace of development was conditioned by the strategic location of the area from the national security point of view. Lahul had no road for vehicular traffic until the early 1960s. Travelling was on foot or ponies, and mules and horses were used for transportation purposes. In fact, Lahul had not seen a wheeled vehicle till about 1964 (Sahni 1994). It was the Chinese attack on India in 1962 that forced the Government of India to realise the strategic importance of these mountains and valleys. Accordingly, major road-construction work started in 1962-63. Before that there was a zigzag mule track about four to six feet in width. This track still exists, but is not used anymore (*Ibid*). Harcourt (1870), the then Assistant Commissioner of Kullu in 1869, has also mentioned that this mule track was constructed in 1863. Before that there was only a footpath, barely wide enough to keep one's foot.

With the construction of the road in the mid-1960s the development process in Lahul was accelerated. Road construction facilitated the mobility of people and goods from Lahul. It helped in the transportation of Lahul's cash crops to markets across the country. In the mid-1960s, potato was introduced as a cash crop in the valley, which gradually became the mainstay of Lahul's economy. The formation of the Lahul Potato Marketing Society (LPS) in the mid-1960s for the marketing of seed potato proved a remarkable event in the development experience of Lahul. The credit for introducing the disease-free seed potato and the formation of LPS goes to Sh. K.S. Bains IAS and Sh. Devi Singh Thakur. This duo has left an indelible impression on the minds and hearts of grateful Lahulis; their portraits are prominently displayed in LPS headquarters in Manali. During my field visit, both in Kullu and Lahul, many respondents mentioned their names with a sense of gratitude for their magnificent contribution in shaping the economy of Lahul. Later, in the 1980s and 1990s *hops* and peas were also introduced in the region, which boosted the economy of Lahul.

The cumulative impact of progressive farming, securing of tribal status and consequent benefits of reservation in educational institutions and government jobs, construction of roads and state planning for

development, initiation of cooperative movement, and enlightened leadership contributed tremendously to the social and spatial mobility of the Lahuli community

Apart from these factors, the institution of joint family and kinship networks has also played a positive role in the mobility and development of the Lahuli community. The institution of joint family in Lahul helped in preventing the division of already scarce land and in sending out its members for education and employment. One need not depend for support only on the father, as there are other members in the family like uncle, grandfather and brothers on whom one can depend upon. Sh. TC, now 48 years old, an engineer, settled in Kullu, stresses the contribution of joint family in his social mobility.

Joint family system has played a positive role in our development and mobility. I and my younger brother, also an engineer, could not have gone for higher education and secured job but for the joint family. No discrimination is made between one's own children and the children of a brother. One does not have to depend only on father for support, as the uncle also performs the same responsibility because they are collectively responsible for the affairs of the family, whether social or economic in nature. Today, we have property at different places in Kullu. This was possible because we constituted a single household in Lahul and property was purchased in Kullu jointly. No division of land/property has taken place. Division of land is not considered good in our family.

Highlighting the importance of joint family, particularly in developing countries, Hugo (1993) has maintained that family has traditionally been the unit within which most decisions about production, investment and consumption are taken. With respect to population mobility, the decision makers within the family decide which family members move and under what conditions. Emphasising the importance of social networks in mobility, he further states that the evidence shows that the majority of persons who move do so along well-trodden paths with which they themselves, their relatives or friends are familiar with. The development of networks is facilitated where the extended family is the rule. In such systems, the patriarch, or the person wielding power within the family, can deploy family members to particular areas and retain control over their earnings.

The joint family system, which has contributed in the development and mobility of Lahulis, is still predominant in Lahul, but is under strain among the migrants in the Kullu Valley where the process of nuclearisation has begun in a significant way. It is evident from Table 1 that, of

the total 150 families of respondents, seventy-four (49.34 percent) are nuclear and seventy-six (50.66 percent) are joint. In the category of joint families, sixty-three (82.9 percent) were lineal and thirteen (17.1 percent), collateral. The Table shows that, even within the category of joint family, the trend is towards decrease in family size. It also shows that nuclearisation is reaching the half way mark at the place of destination.

Table 1 Socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents by their place of origin and place of destination

Characteristics	Place of destination	Place of origin
Family/household type		
Nuclear	74 (49.34)	5 (03.34)
Joint	76 (50.66)	145 (96.66)
Lineal	63 (82.90)	55 (37.90)
Collateral	13 (17.10)	90 (62.10)
Total	150 (100)	150 (100)
Ownership of property/land		
Individual	88 (58.66)	10 (06.66)
Joint	62 (41.34)	140 (93.34)
Total	150 (100)	150 (100)
Whether property/land has been divided?		
Yes	0 (0)	43 (28.66)
No	150 (100)	107 (71.34)
Total	150 (100)	150 (100)

Note: Figures in parentheses refer to percentages

However, at the place of origin, joint family is still the norm, with 96.66 percent families being joint, 37.9 percent of the joint families were lineal and 62.1 percent, collateral. Ownership of property and land at the place of destination is respectively 58.66 percent individual and 41.34 percent joint in nature. It shows that, with nuclearisation, the individualisation of ownership status has also started at the place of destination. The nature of ownership of property at the place of origin is predominantly joint (93.34 percent).

As for division of property, Table 1 shows that there is no division of property/land taking place yet at the place of destination. However,



28 66 percent of the respondents reported division of property at the place of origin at different points of time in the generational history of their families. The reason for the property remaining undivided at the place of destination may be the fact that family members are spreading to new locations by investing their earnings from the cash crops, jobs and other diversified economic activities at the place of destination. They are creating new wealth while retaining in tact the earlier purchased property and land. Moreover, there is no scope for investment at the place of destination. Obviously, the trend at the place of destination is to create new assets and shift to urban locations. Several Lahuli residential colonies have come up in and around Kullu and Manali towns in recent years. Absence of division of property at the place of destination also shows that the orientation of family is joint among the Lahulis. Joint family facilitates social mobility of its members, but once status is attained, the process of nuclearisation begins. This phenomenon is taking place in the context of Lahuli migrants at the place of destination.

In the colonial period very few occupations were available for the Lahulis. Most of them were agriculturists at the subsistence level, some followed traditional trade and were moving out of the region to different places for trade, some were engaged in transport activity, and owned mules and horses for this purpose. They also used to accompany traders carrying their goods. Many Lahulis migrated to work as labourers, masons and carpenters. However, after independence, the Lahulis gradually moved from the traditional occupations to the modern occupations in different phases of development in Lahul. Table 2 shows the occupational profile of respondents and that of their fathers. It is seen that the traditional occupations like trading, mule-keeping for transportation and manual labour are no more in practice. The traditional trade and mule ownership for transport, in fact, ended after the Chinese aggression, and people mainly invested money in Kullu for purchasing land to raise orchards and construct houses. Sh. DC, now 60 years old, BSc in Agriculture, retired as soil conservation officer, settled in Kullu, said

My grandfather, an illiterate person, was the first mover in the family. He owned fifteen mules and used to accompany Lahuli traders, carrying their goods from Lahul to Kullu and back. My father who was educated up to IV Standard also started accompanying my grandfather with mules, and this practice continued up to the 1960s. After the cessation of traditional trade and construction of roads, my father sold the mules and that was the end of this occupation. Some money from selling the mules was used for purchasing land in Kullu and some on my education. I went to Ludhiana and did my BSc Agriculture from Punjab Agricultural University, and joined a

government job in 1970 as Agriculture Inspector I purchased land and constructed a house in 1989 My family is staying here since 1972 My daughter is married, and my son is studying in a Medical College Property is jointly held the place of destination, where my younger brother stays with his family

Table 2 Occupation of the respondents and of their fathers

Occupation	Respondent	Respondent's father
01 Manual	0 (0)	27 (18 00)
02 Small farmer	20 (13 33)	41 (27 33)
03 Mason/carpenter	8 (5 33)	19 (12 66)
04 Mule-owner/transporter	0 (0)	9 (6 00)
05 Small shopkeeper	11 (7 33)	1 (0 66)
06 Traditional trader	0 (0)	40 (26 66)
07 Small orchardist	22 (14 66)	2 (1 33)
08 Big orchardist	14 (9 33)	4 (2 66)
09 Big hotelier	8 (5 33)	0 (0)
10 Class III government service	35 (23 33)	6 (4 00)
11 Professionals	12 (8)	0 (0)
12 Class I/II government service	20 (13 33)	1 (0 66)
Total	150 (100)	150 (100)

Note Figures in parentheses refer to percentages

Table 2 shows that the shift in occupations has been towards horticulture, government services, business and hotel industry As many as sixty-seven respondents were found in the service sector, whereas only seven were found in this category among the respondents' fathers This Table clearly shows that mobility has taken place from the traditional occupations to the modern occupations

The 150 respondents were categorised into three generational categories to examine the trend of occupational change in different generational groups The respondents in the '65+' age group were placed in the first generational category, those in the '45-65' age group, in the second generational category, and those in '<45' age group, in the third generational category The first generational category broadly represents those respondents who went through the hardships of the pre-*kuth* phase, the second generational category represents those respondents who are largely the beneficiaries of the *kuth* phase, and those in the third generational category belong to the potato and combined phase of potato, peas and *hops*

As is evident from Table 3, the occupations of small farming, masonry, carpentry, big orchardist and big hotelier have shown a decline, and Class III government service has shown an upward trend from first to third generational categories. However, most of those in Class I and II government service were found in the second generational category, accounting for 27.41 percent of the total occupations. Only 5.88 percent of such respondents were found in the first generational category, and none in the third generational category. It may be mentioned here that the respondents in Class I and II jobs belong to the period of 1950s and 1960s, when many Lahulis entered the prestigious government services. Most of them are retired now. The spirit of the 1950s and 1960s, the period during which the Lahulis excelled in different services, seems to have waned.

Table 3 Occupational status of the respondents over three generational categories

Occupation	First generation (‘65+’ age group)	Second generation (‘45-65’ age group)	Third generation (‘<45’ age group)	Total
01 Small farmer	12 (23.52)	4 (6.45)	4 (10.85)	20
02 Mason/carpenter	5 (9.80)	2 (3.22)	1 (2.70)	8
03 Small shopkeeper	5 (9.80)	4 (6.45)	2 (5.40)	11
04 Small orchardist	10 (19.60)	5 (8.06)	7 (18.91)	22
05 Big orchardist	6 (11.76)	6 (9.67)	2 (5.40)	14
06 Big hotelier	4 (7.84)	3 (4.83)	1 (2.70)	8
07 Class III government service	5 (9.80)	16 (25.80)	14 (37.83)	35
08 Professionals	1 (1.96)	5 (8.06)	6 (16.21)	12
09 Class I/II government service	3 (5.88)	17 (27.41)	0 (0)	20
Total	51 (100)	62 (100)	37 (100)	150

Note: Figures in parentheses refer to percentages.

In the social mobility of Lahulis there are many examples which reveal that people have risen to high positions from very humble beginnings after much struggle. Sh. TO, 75 years old, settled in Kullu, owns property and land at three places, said:

My father moved to Kullu in the 1930s with his mules for transport. He used to accompany traders from Lahul. He continued in this occupation up to 1940. After his death, my brothers carried on this occupation, and I also started accompanying my brothers to Kullu in 1940-41. I accompanied my brothers to Tibet for three years, from 1941 to 1943. During this period, I

even worked as a labourer in Kullu. I learnt tailoring at Pathikuhl and ran my tailoring shop in a rented accommodation during 1944-49. I borrowed Rs 5,000 from a *seth* known to me at Keylong to start my own business. I raised an orchard in Kullu. My family also shifted to Kullu in 1957. I also started business as an orchard contractor and marketed apples to Delhi markets. I made money in this business and purchased land in Manikaran Valley in 1975. In 1980, I purchased land in Kullu town and constructed a house and a shopping complex. My son is a manager in a bank. One daughter is studying in a medical college, other one is studying at Chandigarh, and one daughter, after graduating from a college in New Delhi, is working in some advertisement agency in New Delhi.

Sh. TO's case is not only of inter-generational mobility, but also of intra-generational mobility.

Occupation and education are considered as two important indicators of social mobility. Studies on social mobility, social stratification and inter-generational social changes have concluded, on quite different bases, that occupational rank is the single most representative indicator of social status, or even of social class membership and participation, though other indicators like income, education, power and authority have also been used to evaluate social status (Kaistha 1987). In this study I have compared the occupation and education levels of respondents with those of their fathers to assess the trends of inter-generational social mobility. I have also assessed social mobility on the basis of case studies.

It is seen from Table-4 that, in comparison with their fathers, the respondents show a trend of upward mobility in all occupations. There are thirty-five respondents in the category of Class III government job, but there is only one such case among the fathers. Similarly, there are twelve professionals in the category of respondents, but no professional was found among the fathers. There are twenty respondents in Class I and II government service, but only one was found in this category among fathers. There are eight big hoteliers among the respondents, but none among their fathers. The fathers of seven of these hoteliers were traders. Similarly, of the fourteen big orchardists among the respondents, the fathers of ten were traders. This shows that the families of traditional traders, who earlier invested their money mainly in horticulture, have now diversified their economic activity to cover hotel industry, too. Of the twenty Class I and II respondents, the fathers of ten are small farmers, one is mule owner, eight are traders and one is in the informal service sector. In brief, occupational mobility has taken place inter-

Table 4 Occupation of the respondents in comparison with that of their fathers'

Respondent	Respondent's father										
	Manual labourer	Small farmer	Mason/ carpenter	Mule- owner/ transporter	Small shop- Keeper	Trader	Small orchardist	Big orchardist	Class III	Class I/II	Total
Small farmer	10	4	2	2	-	2	-	-	-	-	20
Mason/ carpenter	5	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Small shopkeeper	2	1	5	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	11
Small orchardist	4	4	6	1	1	2	-	-	3	1	22
Big orchardist	2	1	1	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	14
Big hotelier	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	1	-	-	8
Class III	4	14	4	3	-	4	2	3	1	-	35
Profes- sionals	-	5	-	-	-	6	-	-	1	-	12
Class I/II	-	10	-	1	-	8	-	-	1	-	20
Total	27	41	19	9	1	40	2	4	6	1	150

generationally and from the traditional occupations to the modern occupations

Comparing the education levels of respondents and that of their fathers', Table 5 shows an inter-generational upward mobility. With 125 of 150 respondents having illiterate fathers, it could not be otherwise

Table 5 Education of the respondents in comparison with that of their fathers'

Respondent	Respondent's father					
	Illiterate	Literate	Primary	Middle	Matric	Total
Illiterate	30	-	-	-	-	30
Literate	9	-	-	-	-	9
Primary	14	2	-	-	-	16
Middle	14	2	-	-	-	16
Matriculate	19	1	3	3	1	27
Intermediate	5	-	1	1	1	8
Graduate	23	1	2	1	-	27
Post-graduate	6	-	1	1	2	10
Professional	5	-	-	1	1	7
Total	125	6	7	7	5	150

Thus, the development process in Lahul after independence has contributed a great deal to the upward social mobility among the Lahulis. With the diversification of occupations, people have moved from the traditional occupations of subsistence farming, trade, mule-keeping for transport and manual labour to scientific farming, horticulture, hotel industry, services in government and the public sector, tourism-based occupations, and a host of other occupational activities. Both inter-generational and intra-generational mobility have taken place in terms of occupation and education.

### **Policy Implications**

Continuous migration from Lahul during the different phases of development has created a labour problem in the region. Many families are finding it difficult to manage their fields at the native place. The labour problem is further aggravated by the migration of women. Women have been the backbone of agricultural activities, besides minding routine household chores. Because of the out-migration of both male and female members of the family, the Lahulis have become increasingly dependant on hired labour from outside the region. Many Gurkha labourers have entered the valley in recent times to attend to agricultural activities. If this process continues unabated, it may change the demographic complexion of Lahul.

Due to continuous out-migration from the Lahul valley, the changing composition of this tribal population would be of serious concern. People will continue to move out for better quality of life and for investment of their income generated from cash crops. The labour problem in Lahul may become intense. Agricultural work will increasingly depend on hired labour from outside the region, particularly on Gurkha labourers who are accustomed to working in tough ecological conditions.

A tunnel to Lahul from Manali, as planned by the Government of India, may increase the prospects of adventure tourism in the Lahul valley, and it may attract tourists beyond Manali and Rohtang Pass. It can also generate investment opportunities in the valley in tourism-based economic activities. It is hoped that the all-weather road connection will positively affect the development of the valley and may lead to the return migration of the tribal population. Due to the strategic location of Lahul, this tunnel is also important from the national security point of view.

Government should explore the possibility of starting some small-scale industrial units, particularly the carpet and shawl-based units, so that people may work throughout the year. The possibility of establishing some electronics-based small-scale industrial units can also be explored in the dust-free winter environment of Lahul. Such ventures will not only generate income and provide employment, but will also arrest the stream of migration from the region.

### **Conclusion**

The Lahulis have made strides in development despite harsh economic and tough geo-climatic conditions. They devised spatial mobility strategies not only to sustain life under difficult ecological conditions,

but also for their development and upward social mobility. By moving to places outside the valley, they learnt new skills, adopted new ideas and techniques, attained higher levels of education, and entered modern occupations and other diversified economic activities.

The emergence of enlightened and dedicated community leadership and strong group solidarity helped in organising the community to safeguard its collective interests. The role of personalities like Thakur Devi Singh, a community leader and his associates, and Sh. K. S. Bains IAS, as development agents is noteworthy, particularly, in the introduction of seed potato and formation of LPS in the development experience of the Lahulis in the mid-1960s. This study shows that leadership within the community can pave effective channels for people's mobilisation and development through effective communication on personal basis. It also points to the fact that honest and dedicated civil servants are not only greatly instrumental in implementing the programmes initiated by the state, but they also provide necessary encouragement for people's own initiatives for development.

The cooperative movement, initiated from within the community, has also played an important role in the development experience of the Lahulis. The joint family in Lahul has helped in preventing the division of already scarce land, and has helped in sending out its members for education and employment. The development experience of the Lahulis, particularly the example of its cooperative participation, community leadership and group solidarity is worth emulation by other communities in pursuit of development.

## Notes

This paper is based on my PhD thesis, *Development and mobility among Lahula community in Himachal Pradesh*, which was submitted to the Panjab University, Chandigarh (2000). I am grateful to my teacher Professor Keshav C. Kaistha, under whose supervision the research was conducted.

- 1 The study, on which this paper is based, was conducted in Kullu Tehsil of Kullu District in Himachal Pradesh where many Lahuli migrants are settled. The Lahuli migrants settled in the Kullu Valley constitute the universe of this study. One hundred fifty respondents representing 150 households, selected from forty-eight locations spread over a distance of 55 km on both the banks of river Beas, comprise the sample of this study. The sample was selected based on the Informant Network Method. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using a structured interview schedule and conducting case studies through focused discussion with key informants. Four villages in Lahul were visited to trace the families of thirty respondents interviewed in Kullu.



- 2 *Kuth* or *costus*—roots of *saussurea lappa*—is an herb of medicinal value. It is also used in the manufacture of perfumes.
- 3 *Hops* or *humulus lupulus* is used in breweries to add a dash of bitterness to beer to give it a peculiar taste.
- 4 To ensure anonymity, the names of respondents have been concealed.

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# **Industrial Workers and the Formation of 'Working-Class Consciousness' In India**

***Namrata Gupta and Raka Sharan***

*According to Karl Marx, the capitalist (private controlled) form of production can be transformed into the socialist form by the instrument of 'working-class consciousness'. This consciousness implies a form of self-realisation by the workers to establish a just and egalitarian social order. By using Michael Mann's model of 'working-class consciousness', this article argues that the Indian working class has achieved most of the attributes of 'class consciousness', and lacks only with regard to sustainability and momentum.*

## **Introduction**

According to Karl Marx, a heterogeneous mass of workers comes together and forms a 'class' consciously. While economic conditions transform the mass of people into workers, this mass is only a *class-in-itself* and not yet a *class-for-itself*<sup>1</sup>. It transforms into a subjective class when a set of values and beliefs emerges along with an organisation (trade union) to represent and realise the objective interests of the working class. Certain aspects of workers' work and life situations (exploitation, deprivation, periodic unemployment, poverty, etc.) are seen as facilitating 'consciousness' and encouraging a collective response. In the literature on working-class consciousness, often workers' consciousness is perceived as 'false consciousness', since workers' movements are usually related to the issues of wages or consumption power. For instance, Georg Lukács (1971) locates the revolutionary dynamic in the social existence of the worker, as opposed to mechanical economic laws. He argues that, because humans in capitalism become completely subservient to perpetually generated *imaginary* needs (which might be defined as 'luxuries') which they are busy attempting to satisfy, the worker thinks of his subjective value in terms of his consumptive power mediated by money. Therefore, the proletariat cannot become aware so as to analyse its situation to achieve true consciousness and revolution. Lukács is forced to rely on the Communist Party as a mediating power for the imputation of revolutionary class-consciousness. Similarly, Melvin Goldberg (1981) distinguishes between worker consciousness

and the revolutionary class-consciousness. The workers' consciousness is one form of collective consciousness that derives from economic struggle, in contrast to class consciousness that derives from political struggle. Michael Mann (1973) has delineated four elements of working-class consciousness. They are

- 1 'Class identity' – the definition of oneself as working class
- 2 'Class opposition' – the defined opposed class
3. 'Class totality' – 'Class identity' and 'Class opposition' taken together
- 4 'Class alternative' – class formation for developing an alternative vision of society

Using Mann's model, we examine the nature and process of the formation of working-class consciousness in India since the development of modern industry in the country since the late nineteenth century. Is the working-class consciousness in India merely an 'economistic consciousness', or is it in the process of attaining Mann's 'class totality' with an alternative vision of society? We attempt to answer these questions through three case studies. The case of Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO) represents the pre-independence scenario, and the cases of Murphy Radios and Kamanı Tubes Limited represent the post-independence period scenario.

### Working-Class Consciousness in Indian Literature

Various social, economic, political, historical and cultural factors have shaped the development of class consciousness in India. Trade unions are an expression of the polarisation of workers against the more powerful force of managers. How far these unions could channelise workers' consciousness has begun to be studied only recently.

Strikes by workers in the pre-independence period have been seen as a product of the nationalist movement or of economic conditions. Considerable work has been done on the history of the trade union movement (see, for example, Punekar 1948, Sharma 1963, Karnik 1966, Pandey 1970). These studies are broad surveys of the development of the trade union movement.

Recent research highlights the nature of multiple identities of workers, which were formed contingently and shaped by the struggle in the work places and outside, and marked by the traces of the state power. They show how simplistic it has been to assume 'essential-cultural' or primordial identities for workers, because these identities were histori-

cally produced and never simply assumed. Furthermore, the various identities of the workers articulated with each other. Earliest labour protests often took the form of 'community consciousness' (Chakrabarty 1976). Primordial loyalties helped in shaping the identity of workers in the factories (Joshi 1999). Analysing the emergence of class consciousness during the general strikes in Bombay (now Mumbai) during 1928-29, R. Chandavarkar (1999) concluded that class consciousness among workers does not come naturally, and it is not an irreversible change. It is created through political struggle and dialogue, and dissipates when these forces fail to persist.

Some studies have emphasised the negative role of primordial loyalties—for example, those of caste, religion and kin—that prevent the emergence of workers' class-consciousness. N R. Sheth (1981) found in Rajnagar that informal bonds of caste etc. between workers and management affected workers' interest in the union. Richard D. Lambert (1963), in his study of factory workers at Poona (now Pune), showed how influence and informal channels played a role in the recruitment of workers. K. Mamkoottam found a general apathy among the workers of TISCO towards the existing trade union mainly due to 'cross-cutting alliances of caste, regionalism and wage differentials' which 'pulled the industrial workers apart' instead of bringing them together as a viable organised group (1982: 124).

Some studies have shown that workers can transcend these loyalties and organising themselves even in the pre-independence period (see Bahl 1995). E. A. Ramaswamy (1988) has dealt with worker consciousness and the changes in the Indian labour movement through his study of Bombay, Madras (now Chennai), Bangalore and Calcutta (now Kolkata). According to him, the grouping based on caste, religion, etc., is a stereotype, which no longer holds true for the modern organised industry. Some studies have focused on the relationship between the union leadership and the rank and file, and workers' participation in the trade union which are important in highlighting workers' consciousness. For example, K. N. Vaid's (1965) survey of Delhi textile workers has shown that workers join unions mainly for social and political reasons and for protection against the complicated rules and legislations of the work place. Thus, the study of trade unionism fulfils only partially the need to understand workers' consciousness. Workers' consciousness has several aspects: daily struggles of the rank and file workers to promote their interests, workers joining unions to present a united front to the powerful management, and their ability to overthrow union leaders if

they fail to deliver; the emergence of union leaders from the rank and file of workers

Class consciousness among industrial workers of India started emerging with the establishment of the factory system in the country. Even then, workers could unite themselves for protecting and promoting their interests. However, in the early period they lacked political maturity to have leaders from their own rank and file. Being illiterate and ignorant, they were not able to form organisation by themselves and for themselves, they relied on the outsiders belonging to various political parties. Political parties alone could provide leaders who could build organisations. However, the political leaders brought along with them the politics of their parties that led to the division of the unions on political lines. This scenario continued after independence. Employers have taken advantage of this division in the ranks of the workers, and have sometimes played up one union against another (Karnik 1966)

Since the 1980s, there has been a growing realisation among workers of the need for unity. The changing social background of labour has itself provided a favourable circumstance for this awareness. The traditional stereotype of the industrial worker being illiterate, low-caste migrant pushed out of his village by unemployment are becoming characteristics of the yesteryears (Ramaswamy 1988: 12). Most enterprises in the organised sector would simply not consider for employment anyone without a school completion certificate. The presence of graduates and post-graduates in the blue-collar labour force is increasingly becoming common (see *Ibid.*, see also Breman 1999: 37). For the skilled trades, a technical diploma from an industrial training institute is an additional requirement. With wages quite attractive and employment so scarce, the blue-collar labour force has also become a heterogeneous mix of various castes and religious backgrounds. Thus, the situation is vastly different from the past. These differences in the pre- and post-independence periods are clearly brought out in the chosen case studies based on the existing secondary sources.

We illustrate the above observations with reference to the process of emergence of class consciousness through three case studies. First, we examine the case of TISCO (Bahl 1995), which illustrates the rise of working-class consciousness in the pre-independence period. The second case is of Murphy Radios in Thane (Ramaswamy 1988), which shows the maturity of class consciousness in the post-independence years. Finally, we analyse the case of Kamani Tubes Limited (Srinivas 1993), which is an example of achievement of self-confidence among the workers.

### **Case Studies**

#### **Tata Iron and Steel Company (TISCO)**

TISCO was the first heavy and basic industry in India set up with exclusively Indian capital. The formation of the TISCO labour force was conditioned by the historical circumstances. The colonial government's forest policy, with restrictions on local use and state monopoly, contributed to the decline of indigenous iron industry, the deteriorating conditions of peasants and recurring famines. This created a migratory labour force, which provided a distinct labour force for TISCO (Bahl 1995: 398). As a labour force its consciousness was shaped by the policies of the management. To keep the production costs down and to compete with imported steel, the latter kept its labour under strict control. They tried to foster divisions among the workers by creating different status groups. The colonial government, which was equally interested in the smooth running of the steel industry, because of the demand for steel during the two World Wars, was ever ready to save TISCO from labour troubles. In spite of these constraints, the TISCO workers could remain united for a long period, transcending their religious, regional and other differences. This unity was manifested in strikes as a united struggle for getting economic benefits from the employers.

Four major strikes took place—in 1920, 1922, 1928 and 1942—in the pre-independence period. The workers initially lacked deliberate organisations for staging their struggles. When they declared the strike in 1920, they were not organised. Slowly, the workers learnt to organise themselves, initially with the help of a Congress worker, Baba Thakkar. The Jamshedpur Labour Association (JLA) was formed as a product of these efforts. The management refused to recognise any union till 1945, and it negotiated with leaders as Congressmen, not as the union leaders. The JLA, formed under the leadership of educated men following Congress ideology, remained weak in its collective consciousness and discipline. It was mainly used for realising the aspirations of its leaders. It had a narrow community base among the Bengali clique and was closely associated with the management, which made workers suspicious of its intentions.

Thus, the militant illiterate workers formed a rival union, the Jamshedpur Labour Federation (JLF). However, JLF did not prove any better, as the leaders joined forces with the management. Finally, it was an earnest Congressman, Abdul Bari, who showed deep concern for the

workers' problems and formed the Tata Worker's Union (TWU), which replaced the discredited JLA. Through TWU, Bari was successful in making the workers accept the principle of collective bargaining, thus fostering a sense of collective responsibility. The TISCO workers became class-conscious, in the sense that they became aware of their common pattern of life, disposition and actions. Based on this consciousness they challenged the prevailing social relations and struggled to change them.

This movement, like many other workers' movements in the pre- and post-independence periods, suffered from some major defects. The unions were formed and led by a political leadership that did not emerge from among the workers themselves. Unions were usually one-man shows, were autocratic with workers having little say in the decisions of the unions.

The key findings of the TISCO case may be summarised as follows:

- 1 Workers could put up a united front
- 2 Workers were not able to have a leader from among them to lead their movement
- 3 Workers showed a certain amount of resistance in accepting the authority of the 'outside leaders'
- 4 Workers were determined to get redressal of their grievances through collective efforts, and they did not adhere to a leader who engaged in his own selfish agenda
- 5 Workers became increasingly aware of their unity and collective identity

These findings suggest that the workers could achieve the first two elements of Mann's paradigm: they developed a collective identity, and were able to unite to form an opposed group to the exploiters/management.

In the post-independence period, the TWU is led by worker leaders rather than by political leaders, and it is the only recognised union in TISCO. However, the TISCO worker is apathetic and alienated by trade unionism. With the union functioning as a company union, defeat of attempts by rival unions to establish hold due to the company-union-party nexus, factionalism among workers and 'paternalistic' attitude of the company that ensures loyalty of the workers has led to a complete lack of homogeneity of interest, aspirations and ideology among the workers (Mamkoottam 1982).

As in TISCO, a lack of interest in trade unionism is a common feature elsewhere in the country, too. There was no radical break from the past in the post-independence period. Leadership positions continued

to be vested in outsiders. However, the industrial relations climate has been far from being stagnant. At least in the metropolitan cities the situation has been slowly but surely changing. The growth in educational and industrial sectors, sustained experience of industrial employment, metropolitan residence, and greater politicisation of the wider environment have contributed to a greater assertiveness among the labour force and a gradual maturing of the workers' consciousness (Ramaswamy 1988: 226)

### **Murphy Radios**

Murphy Radios, a medium-sized company in Thane, producing radio receivers and home electronics, illustrates the maturing of the workers' consciousness. It is a case of workers rejecting Datta Samant as their union leader soon after seeking him out (Ramaswamy 1988)

The workers of this company have been organised in a trade union since 1952 and, except for a brief period of affiliation to the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), the union has remained aloof from the big federations and the leadership has always emerged from the ranks. Union elections have been held periodically, leaders have been accessible to the ranks and done whatever they could to alleviate their problems. Some leaders did use their position to further themselves, but there has been no serious accusation of corruption. However, the leaders have been excessively bound by formal and legal methods of dispute resolution. From 1952, when the workers first voiced their grievances through the union, the employer's style has been to drag issues to the court, strike a bilateral deal with the union after it has been softened by delays, and have the court ratify the agreement as its award. The company also operated an incentive scheme that rewarded the workers for productive efficiency and good conduct, and tended to wean the workers from the union. The managerial style changed for the worse in 1969 when the company decided to fight out the union's wage demand in the court. Delay in court's award, deterioration of business conditions leading to retrenchment, sparked off the first ever strike in Murphy Radios, lasting for a month in 1972. This strike ended in failure due to the settlement promoted by the labour department to terminate the strike and the subsequent lockout. In the perception of the ordinary worker, the collective strength of labour appeared to be no match to the power of the employer, and the government machinery seemed to dispense no justice. Workers and their union were demoralised. In the 1970s, due to the economic slump, the company began to reduce the size of its labour force



and contract out jobs to small manufacturers outside. This was followed by the Emergency (1975-77), with all its consequences for labour protests. Murphy Radios workers were simmering with discontent. There had been no change in the service conditions since the award of 1972. The leaders continued their legalistic style and went to the court over the issue of contracting out jobs. The court ruled that it had no jurisdiction over the matter. By 1980, the workers had completely lost faith in the leadership.

Thus, a section of the young workers established contact with the Maharashtra General Kamgar Union (MGKU) of Datta Samant. The Union, in a bid to save itself, reached hurried settlement with the management, which also sensed the need for it. However, the measly benefits offered to the workers led them to walk out of their Union, and Datta Samant was soon in command as the leader of the Murphy Radios workers. Unable to quell the rising tide of protest, the management was forced to extend recognition to the MGKU and reach settlement with Samant. The settlement, however, did not meet the workers' expectations. Certain monetary benefits were given in return for enhanced productivity. The workers were in no mood to give increased production, while the MGKU wanted the workers to stick to their commitments. Moreover, the Union refused to do anything about the closure of the carpentry section employing 157 workers.

By August 1981, it was time to demand the bonus, but the management refused anything beyond the statutory minimum of 8.33 percent. The Union launched a 'go-slow' protest without any result. The management imposed a lockout due to acts of violence by the activists and their back out on the productivity clause. Samant made no effort to end the stalemate. Workers now took the initiative to find another union. They found support in the Engineering and General Mazdoor Sangh (EGMS), affiliated to the labour wing of the Bharatiya Janata Party. The EGMS approached the workers individually for support, and within two months it had sizeable support. Samant refused to withdraw from the scene. He moved the court, but his contention, that it was an unfair labour practice to bypass the recognised union and deal with another, was dismissed. Samant's men now stepped up their terror tactics. In contrast, the EGMS had been active in the cause of the workers. When the labour minister suggested that both the unions negotiate jointly with the employers, the workers refused. Thus, Samant lost, and this was the end of MGKU at Murphy Radios. The matter was finally settled with the help of EGMS.

The following key points emerge from the Murphy Radios case

- 1 Workers can understand their own interests. They have no compunction in dumping the leaders, whether internal or external, if those leaders cannot deliver.
- 2 The external leaders usually appeared to be insensitive to the workers' day-to-day problems. This was seen in Samant agreeing to the productivity clause and refusing to take up the issue of closure of the carpentry section.
- 3 The outside leaders were not representative of workers' consciousness in any way, since they were willing to indulge in violence even against the workers if a threat to their leadership arose.
- 4 The process of court settlements and the delays involved, acted against the workers' interests.
- 5 The case exhibits the rising consciousness among the workers so as to be able to take initiatives on their own.
- 6 The workers' refusal to act as stooges of any leader and the development of another union which was totally their own (that is, from their rank and file) suggest that working-class consciousness was characterised by the third element—'class totality'—of Mann's paradigm.

In recent years, workers have been exhibiting dynamism to take up leadership of not only the unions but also the management. This points in the direction of workers being on the threshold of achieving the form of Mann's 'class alternate'. It is interesting to point out that there have been many cases, along with that of the Murphy Radios, to suggest the emergence of workers' solidarity. The example of Kamani Tubes Limited constitutes the first-ever takeover by the workers of a sick industrial unit in India (Srinivas 1993).

### **Kamani Tubes Limited**

Set up by the Kamani family in Bombay in 1959, the Kamani Tubes Limited suffered a reversal of its fortunes with the death of the family patriarch in 1972. The heavy losses that followed led to the abandonment of factory premises by the management in 1985. The Kamani Employees Union (KEU), the sole representative union of workers in the Kamani compound, became independent of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) affiliation in the 1960s. It is commendable that, when the Kamani family abandoned the factory premises, it was the workers and their union who guarded the factory. After exploring various schemes for reviving the unit, the KEU presented a revival scheme to the Supreme Court which, in a historic judgment in April 1988, upheld the workers' right to manage the company (under the Sick Industrial Companies Act of 1985). According to B. Srinivas (*Ibid.* 172-73), the patience, and

perseverance of workers and the knowledge and intelligence of their leaders enabled the Kamani workers to fight their prolonged battle. The KEU was without any political affiliation, and it strove hard to keep the workers' fight alive by not letting itself be covered by any political coterie.

The following key points follow from this case study

- 1 The workers were alert to the fortunes of the company and the manipulations of the management. They were not willing to accept the autocracy of the management readily.
- 2 The threat of loss of livelihood acts as a potent force in raising class consciousness among workers.
- 3 It points to the consciousness among workers that, since productivity is a common effort, the right and responsibility to control and manage it rests with all the members of the group.
- 4 State can play a vital role in the development of a healthy workers' movement through meaningful legislations.

### **Discussion**

The main question is whether independent unions are capable of emerging as an alternative movement. The experience with independent trade unions in Mumbai and other regions indicate that they tend to be isolationist. They are more democratic than the party trade unions, but their concerns are limited to their own micro situations. These unions have yet to come together to build a wider movement, which could offer an alternative to the party unionism. Such a movement, with its own creative trade union ideology and politics, is likely to reflect workers' consciousness in the real sense, and will mark a new phase in the making of the Indian working class.

The three cases discussed in this article suggest that the workers' collective efforts have undergone a sea change. The first case (TISCO) depicts the authoritarian behaviour of union leaders who could override the working-class consciousness, while the second case (Murphy Radios) presents the democratisation of union leadership. In the workers' organisations (trade unions) of pre-independence India, the 'leadership-centred trade unionism' was the norm. The leaders organised the union activities and nurtured the unions as their own fiefdom. This model was present in TISCO.

The dominance of middle-class professional politicians in the labour movement continued in the immediate post-independence period, too. Unconcerned about daily work-centred problems, such leadership

usually bargains for monetary benefits by trading greater managerial control over work process. This leadership is autocratic, is indifferent to democratic decision-making and sticks to the historical stereotype that workers cannot take responsibility for themselves. As the Murphy Radios case suggested, workers now increasingly resent an autocratic political leadership. Till the 1950s and 1960s, when trade unionism was in its infancy, such a leadership was a historical necessity, since workers could not articulate their interests. This rationale no longer holds good, since worker activists who understand trade unionism and the work organisation have emerged.

While the outside leaders may be required to handle legal matters, the worker activists are the driving force of the labour movement. One pattern, which is quite normal, is that power and office vests mainly with the activists, but an outside leader is chosen to occupy the office of the president. The bulk of the unions in Bangalore and Mumbai, and the vast majority in Chennai are of this kind. The second type of situation is where the leadership vests entirely with the worker activists. About one-fourth of the unions in Mumbai are of this type. In West Bengal there is considerable politicisation of the industrial relations environment and unions usually seek affiliations with a federation. Yet, in a few industries in Kolkata, such as Metal Box, activists control all union positions (Ramaswamy 1988). According to S. Davala, an important change in the traditional jute industry in Bengal, during the last five or six years, has been 'that of workers rejecting the party trade unions and forming their own independent unions' (1996: 46). Davala cites the examples of Kanoria, Victoria, Hanuman and other jute mills to prove the point. In Kanoria, in 1993, workers deserted the established trade unions *en masse* and formed an independent union, since they were vexed with the indifference of the established unions to their demands. They also succeeded in getting the recognition for their union.

The last pattern is where the leader organises the union, nurtures it and presides over it for a long period. This leader-centred trade unionism, which was one of the typical forms of the labour movement, is now becoming a stereotype. This model is now to be found more in older industries such as textiles, jute, plantations and the collieries. As we shift from the older to new industries, there is also a shift from leader-centred to activist-controlled unions. The cadre-controlled trade unions are characterised by unity among workers; activists have no interest in splitting the union and will do their utmost to prevent division. Such unions are wary of affiliations with national federations, which seem to symbolise outside domination and fragmentation of the labour force.

along political lines. Cadre activists are suspicious of political parties. Political parties intending to push their own political agenda and promoting distant interests are far removed from the concerns of the workplace. On the other hand, activists can bargain for their interests better, since they are more knowledgeable about the enterprise and its work process. Their monetary demands are likely to be modest as they are likely to have limited access to information about the benefits available across the country. Also, their demands themselves are composite, going beyond wages and benefits. They will not, therefore, trade off other interests for money.

In the present scenario the elimination of political leadership from trade unions appears difficult. It may happen if certain unfavourable factors plaguing the industrial relations are removed. First, workers should be able to deal with the state's legal process on their own. This is possible only if the legal process becomes simple and inexpensive, and redressal is quick. Second, as Sharit K. Bhowmik (1996) points out, there is no law providing for compulsory recognition of trade unions in enterprises. Recognition of unions is left to the discretion of the management, which negotiates only with the union so recognised. Thus, the union actually recognised may only be a stooge of the management or it may not be truly representative of the workers. For a strong workers' movement it seems imperative that an independent apex body should recognise unions based on some objective criteria.

To conclude, several cases of independent unions in the country, appearing as alternatives to the existing trade union federations, offer hope of a genuine labour movement. However, it has still a long way to go. Various independent unions need to come together in a big way to challenge party trade unionism. The task might become easier with the growth of worker literacy and the creation of a favourable industrial relations climate in the country.

## Notes

- 1 Marx (1976-82) refers to this in *The poverty of philosophy*. Exploitation by the dominant class is not a sufficient condition for the existence of a subjective class. Conflict over economic rewards, physical proximity of workers and ease of communication among them bring about solidarity, organisation and a consciousness of common hostility which results in a 'class-for-itself' or a 'subjective class'.

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## The Cartoon of a Bengali Lady Clerk: A Repertoire of Sociological Data

*Dalia Chakrabarti*

*Visual representations are like sociological text. Cartoon, one of many forms of visual representation, illustrates this. Benoy Bosu's famous cartoon of a first generation Bengali lady clerk of the early twentieth century reveals the contemporary dominant male Bengali perception about an emergent category—the educated, working (so, earning), smart and liberated Bengali women. Cartoons usually criticise social practices by poking fun at these. To banter is not simply a moral act, it is political, too. This cartoon exposes not only a moral condemnation of women's liberation, but also a powerful presentation of a ridiculous image of working women by contemporary patriarchal Bengali mainstream culture.*

When the cartoon is not meant for simple humour, when, as a visual representation of social reality, it acquires a dialectical relation with social practices and forces, when people to whom it has been addressed realise the meaning conveyed by the cartoonist and start thinking and acting based on it—then the cartoon ceases to be only a form of visual art meant for fun. It concerns sociologists as well, it offers them a social text to reflect upon. Generally, we are inclined to take for granted the pre-eminence of written text in most areas of knowledge, and to regard any accompanying visual material as at best secondary to it. However, the verbal/visual hierarchy is reversed in the case of visual art. We may recall Roland Barthes' analysis of the relation between text (written) and image:

the image no longer *illustrates* [author's italics] the words, it is now the words which, structurally are parasitic on the image. It is not the image [in our case, the cartoon], which comes to elucidate or 'realise' the text, but the latter which comes to sublimate, patheticise or rationalise the image (1977: 25-26).

In the cartoon, very often, supportive captions are non-existent.

### Status of Visual

In the history of human cultures the dominant form of communication has not always been verbal. Both Michel Foucault (Gutting 1989) and Svetlana Alpers (1983) discuss times and places when visual cultures predominated (for example, seventeenth century Holland, or emphasis on drawing of characters in the Chinese or Japanese languages, or modern photography culture of the West). J. Berger (1972), on the front cover of *Ways of seeing*, asserts that 'Seeing comes before words'. Even the making of twentieth century western society, which constituted sociology's subject matter, and at the same time gave birth to the discipline, has had a distinctively visual dimension. Both photography and sociology emerged in the same year, in 1839 (Chaplin 1994: 198).

However, until very recently the visual has been marginalised in sociology. Since the 1970s some sociologists began reckonable use of visual depictions in their works (see for example, Goffman 1979). In late the 1980s and the early 1990s there was a greater awareness of the visual potential (Chaplin 1994: 277). This was possible due to a commensurate development at the methodological level. The postmodern position is that sociology of the topic should be replaced by a sociology, which reduces the distance between itself and its object of investigation. It asks the researcher continuously to reflect upon her/his social location and find out its bearing on research process. Also, the distinction between verbal analysis and visual representation as data, it believes, should become less clear-cut. Taking a cue, this paper intends to present the cartoon, a form of visual representation, as a specific sociological text and a repertoire of qualitative data.

### The Cartoon's Potential for Sociology

Any cartoon has two elements: a *drawing* and an *idea*. It is a complete construction. A good cartoon does not need a caption. In a single frame, using only black and white, the whole argument is expressed. The cartoon is predominantly critical by nature, though funny in form, and despite its narrow range, it records significant changes in society. It is usually a popular item in any newspaper or a magazine. It makes the readers smile, often gives words to the deprived, and even suggests the way out.

The cartoon reveals moral standpoints of a given historical society as it criticises social practices in the form of ridicule or banter. The whole of society may not share a cartoonist's position. But that a cartoon



is made and becomes popular indicates the presence of a particular political or ethical position. Often there is a conscious attempt by a cartoonist to create public awareness about an issue and to form public opinion in tune with his own. Related to this is the question of power. To banter is not merely a moral act, it is political, as well, as the object of banter often becomes an object of domination. However, the need for this display of power arises when the entrenched section of a society perceives a threat to it. Hence, the cartoon often reflects a sense of mis-giving or fear on the part of the subject. Its potential for sociology lies in the facts that the cartoon articulates culture, particularly various moral positions and norms, that it represents politics, particularly pathology of power, and that it even acts as a stimulus for critical reflection on events and eventualities. In support of my argument, I would cite Benoy Bosu's famous cartoon of a first generation lady clerk of early twentieth century Bengali society (see Figure 1). This is also to draw attention of fellow sociologists to the possibility of a visual sociology of Indian society. There is an evident lack of use of visual representations in Indian sociology; G S Ghurye's anthropological writings are an exception (1951).

### **Meanings Underlying the Lady Clerk Cartoon**

Figure 1 presents the cartoon of a lady clerk walking fast clutching her umbrella firmly. She seems to be in great hurry. It reflects a new sense of time—the male (worker's/employee's) time—imperatively acquired by the new generation of working women in Bengal. Her posture is very much different from the feminine 'laid off' posture typical of the category of women not engaged in productive labour outside household. The masculinisation of lady clerk's movement is reflected in her long male strides. She is looking straight compared with feminine shyness inculcated by gender-specific socialisation, which discourages looking up. She has a big, black umbrella—again not the lady's type, that is, small, light, and colourful. There is a long association between large black umbrella and clerkship in both England and Bengal. Her attire facilitates rapid movement at public place. *Sari* is tightly wrapped around her waist—neither flowing in feminine grace, nor used to cover head or face. Typical male-covered shoes, and not feminine slippers, adorn her feet. Her accessories such as jacket, petticoat, umbrella, shoes and stockings reflect the typical westernised outfit of the smart educated working woman of early twentieth century Bengal (Tarlo 1996: 12). She has put up her hair neatly in a tight bun. There is little trace of jewellery on her body. Last, her

Figure 1 The lady clerk



Source Bosu (1927)

spectacles signify her engagement in mental work, traditionally considered an exclusively male domain

Here, contemporary lady clerk was obviously perceived from the point of view of nineteenth and early twentieth century urban educated Bengali men. Their resort to cartoons indicates their westernisation, because the cartoon itself is western in origin. In India, it first appeared taking inspiration directly from *London punch*<sup>1</sup> (Lahiri 1995: 122). Ironically, the lady clerk, their object of 'attack' was a product of the same process. The practice of making fun of working women started in Europe approximately during World War II. To relieve the tension and anxiety of army men many magazines, full of humorous cartoons, came up. These became popular as 'army cartoons'. During the War many women worked in various military offices. So, there were cartoons on girls in uniform. These magazines—*The frontier*, *Men only*, *Army news*, etc—were found abundantly in the footpaths of Calcutta (particularly in Chowringhee). So, Calcutta men got a taste of it very easily.

Apart from this indirect inspiration, the War brought change directly in the very-private domain of Bengali society—its home. For the first time then educated Bengali women started coming out of their home and domestic life, hitherto known as the only sphere of activity for women. The root of this transition can be traced to the nineteenth century movement for women's education. The aim of this men-initiated movement was to improve women's position within the familial framework, that is, to make them more capable wives and mothers. The reformers believed that though men's education had direct relation to employment, women's education had nothing to do for the public sphere. However, in the twentieth century, when educated women took up leadership of this movement, they redefined goals of female education. Abala Bose, Kamini Roy, Begum Rokeya Sakhayat Hossain—all fought hard to establish inherent 'natural' equality between men and women and they perceived education as a necessary tool to secure equality (Bharati Ray 1990: 47).

The dramatic changes that swept the Bengali society, economy, polity and culture during and after the two World Wars, and later during partition of Bengal, compelled Bengali women to seek paid work out of financial necessity.<sup>2</sup> During the War there were plenty of jobs for them as well as the moral support of the colonial British rulers. True, they never went to the front, but played a very crucial role in supply line. Then onwards, Bengali girls never looked back. Before the War the only profession open to them was teaching in school. During the War various new opportunities opened. As working women they had to stay out of home for five to six hours everyday rubbing shoulders with non-kin men. Naturally mothers-in-law and other members of the family did not appreciate it. Sometimes there were attempts to resist it. But, ultimately this initiated a stable pattern of change in Bengali life. Many a cartoon flourished out of this fertile soil of social transition. The cartoon under investigation is one example.

The nineteenth century Bengali society had a very rigid gendered division of labour. A severely binary division of every aspect of social and moral life, and of family life, into masculine and feminine was evident. This binary social organisation is a complex of structural relations and the ground for female (or male) subjectivities and agencies (Bannerji 2002: 191). This segregation—which continued—of the public and the private, the world and the home, indicating separate spheres of activities for men and women is explained by subaltern historians, such as Partha Chatterjee (1994, see also 1986), as a nationalist 'resolution' of the nationalist male elite's coming to terms with colonialism. For this school, compartmentalisation was a mechanism to create a protected

space which colonialism could not intrude. This unconquered and thus uncontaminated private world of home remained the nationalist males' sphere of rule.

Although this explanation is debatable, we have located a loud social uproar in the then Bengali society after the collapse of these two distinct domains due to the imperatives of colonialism and capitalism. This collapse marked a simultaneous inversion of the normative and the power structures of Bengali society. Bengali males, who had already lost ground at the public level, being economically dominated and politically subjugated by the colonial system, apprehended a similar defeat at home, their last bastion. Nirad Chandra Chaudhuri (1968: 152) also noted this paradox: the conservatism of urban educated 'modern' Bengali men of colonial times. He explained it in terms of their intense patriotic feeling. The nationalist temper stimulated them to be completely dedicated to traditional Hindu way of life and highly critical of any deviance from the ideal typical Hindu normative structure.<sup>3</sup> Women stepping out of their home to join the workforce was one such deviance. Since men could not prevent it, they often tried to make fun of such women. Hence, the cartoon.

### Other Representations with Same Meanings

The idea reflected in this cartoon is not an isolated one. Dev Sen notes that 'women figure very prominently as victims of satire, as the ones laughed at. They are the butts of more than 50 percent of all male humour' (1990: 68). That it pervaded a sizeable section of contemporary Bengali society can be established citing the presence of similar representations, both visual and verbal. For example, there were popular cartoons portraying (a) a mother combing her hair with full concentration in front of a mirror, totally oblivious of the crying child on her lap (see Figure 2) (Lahiri 1995: 9)—signifying a serious deviation from the traditional duty of the mother, that is, child rearing, and (b) a highly educated mother reading a book on child rearing while the unattended child was crying desperately (see Figure 3) (*Ibid.*: 13). It reflected the contemporary male conviction that modern formal education failed to equip women to fulfil her basic domestic obligations.

Similar cartoons bantering women's liberation appeared in other countries as well. For example, there was one where an army man on his way back home from the battle front was taken aback by the appearance of modern western women, who just acquired voting right after World War I (see Figure 4) (*Ibid.*: 10). In this cartoon, the typical liberated

Figures 2 Hideous makeup



Rearing up of children is the only purpose of women's life. The traditional ideal was that a woman should not spend time on beautifying herself—dressing hair, making up face—but rather should take care of her husband and his elder brothers—arranging their sumptuous meals—even while she herself remains half-fed [author's translation from the original in Bengali]

Source: Monthly *Bangasree*, reproduced in Lahiri (1995: 9)

woman wore a very short hair and an equally short skirt, and had a lighted cigarette on her lips. The man sighed and questioned whether he risked his life in battle field for all these. A Japanese cartoon showed the liberated wife sitting idle while the husband was busy with household chores (see Figure 5) (*Ibid.*: 105)

Plenty of similar verbal representations, bantering sharply women's alleged lack of religious sentiment, distaste for domestic work, love of luxury, selfishness and westernisation, etc. are found in contemporary Bengali literature. A few poems are referred here as examples. '*Kolir haat*', by Atul Krishna Mitra (1857-1912), portrayed modern educated degree-holding Bengali women publicly celebrating their victory over men and dreaming about bossing over them in various modern professions like law and medicine (Mitra 1892). '*Pash kora mag*', by Radha Binod Halder, depicted how modern women used to dismiss their hus-

Figure 3 Obtained first class in BA – then



Educated women neglect their children This idea has become redundant now But, before World War II, women's higher education was frowned upon [author's translation from the original in Bengali]

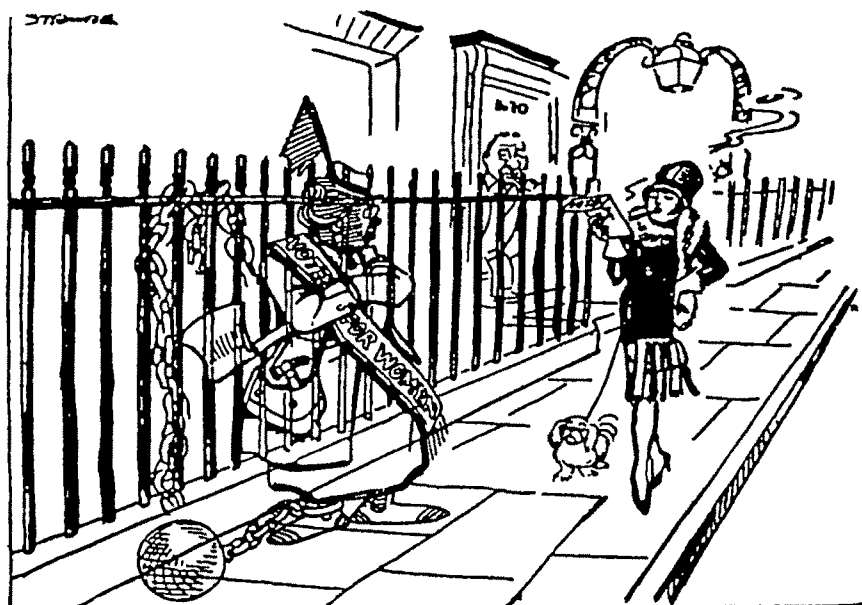
Source Source Monthly *Bangasree*, reproduced in Lahiri (1995 13)

band and inclined to develop extramarital relations without any feeling of shame and fear (Halder 1888) Poet Iswar Gupta (1811-1859) lamented the moral degradation of modern women, and held colonial education policy responsible for it (Dasgupta and Mukhoti 1978 44-45) In the closing years of the nineteenth century, Amritlal Bosu composed a song portraying modern women enjoying their liberation from household chores and their newly acquired power to boss over their husbands (Bagchi 1988: 76) D L Ray, through his parody of a Tagore song ('*Ke aase dhire*'), ridiculed new food habits, changed style of dressing and mannerisms of blindly westernised modern Bengali women (Adhikari 2001: 59) An essay in a Bengali magazine (*Bangabidya prakasika patrika*, 1876, 13<sup>th</sup> issue) dismissed women's empowerment as irrational. It refuted the argument that qualified and educated women would be as responsible as men in public activities

### Conclusion

In this paper I have presented the cartoon as a representation, which through visual language conveys to other people ideas and feelings of the cartoonist Thus, meanings are produced and eventually exchanged

Figures 4 Have I fought such a big battle in their interest!



Women obtained their voting rights after the World War I. Her skirt became shorter, she started smoking and wearing a very short hair. The soldier, on his return from war, was amazed by such liberation [author's translation from the original in Bengali]

Source Source Strube 1927, reproduced in Lahiri (1995: 10)

Meanings are not merely for one's understanding, they organise and regulate social practices

My analysis primarily follows the discursive approach, which, unlike the semiotic approach (where focus is on the general role of signs, here the cartoon, as vehicles of meanings in culture), takes into account the broader role of a discourse in culture. While semiotic approach throws light on 'poetics' of representation, that is, how it produces meaning, discursive approach primarily deals with its politics, that is, its consequences (Hall 1997: 6). Hence, the historical specificity of the cartoon of a lady clerk—its form and purpose at a specific historical time and space—has been thoroughly examined. It is definitely an interpretative work without any modernist claim to establish a single, authentic, stable meaning. Each viewer of a cartoon has his or her own understanding of it. This 'taking of meaning' is as much a signifying practice as the 'putting into meaning' (*Ibid.* 10). Nevertheless, deciphering mean-

Figure 5



Women are now emancipated. Husbands must do household chores [author's translation from the original in Bengali]

Source *National review*, Japan, 1927, reproduced in Lahiri (1995: 105)

ing presupposes existence of a shared culture, which sustains the dialogic exchange between the viewer and the creator of the visual object. Thus, this work goes beyond both the positivists' attempt to present their accounts as objective, definitive and true, and the post-positivist belief in plurality and variability of social science accounts.

## Notes

- 1 In India, the cartoon appeared first in *Delhi sketch book*. It was published from Delhi Gazette Press, Delhi by some Englishmen, virtually imitating the *London punch*. P. Windham, an American, started publication of *Indian charivari* (15 November 1872) from Calcutta. However, the first purely Indian cartoon appeared in a Bengali news daily, *Amrita bazar patrika* (turned into English language newspaper since 1878).
- 2 Pushpamayee Basu, an ex-school teacher, reminisced in a personal interview that, since the 1940s, girl students started planning in terms of gainful employment, possibly as an impact of World War II (Prasanta Ray 1990: 49).
- 3 Chaudhuri established his claim citing the novel *Gora* (1910) by Tagore.



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## Book Reviews

**Akbar S. Ahmed** *Islam under siege Living dangerously in a post-honour world* New Delhi Vistaar Publications, 2003, xi + 213 pp , Rs 380 (pb) ISBN 81-7829-306-4

'I've spent my life living to repair the image of Islam Has it all been in vain?', laments Akbar S Ahmed Ahmed's statement and the title of his book highlight the turmoil the Muslim community is going through In the present time of challenge and despair, Ahmed, known as a moderate Muslim, has attempted to explore, 'what is going wrong with the Muslim community', and has tried to seek an explanation not only as an insider, but as an outsider as well

Although the method used in the work is claimed to be 'reflexive anthropology', the mark of an Islamic scholar, that too, a devout Muslim, is very much evident throughout the book No wonder, he uses the normative aspect of Quran, now and then, to support his views, even to the extent of presenting a thesis that 'if the political leadership in its behaviour, ideas, and politics is close to the Islamic ideal friction in society is minimal . The primary and greatest model for Muslims is that of the holy Prophet His life provides the balance between action and spirit, between this world and the next' (p 106) Is not this true for other religious figures like Lord Rama and Guru Nanak, too? The big question is 'who is ready to follow them in a true sense?'

To understand the struggle taking place within the Muslim world, Ahmed has examined two notions, namely, *asabiyya* and honour *Asabiyya*, a term used by Ibn Khaldun, refers to social cohesion or solidarity that binds a group together through a common language, culture and code of behaviour In the Muslim societies *asabiyya* is collapsing due to certain external factors like technological changes along with many new and alien ideas which have threatened the traditional patterns of identity, values and customs Therefore, *asabiyya*, which was once the core of social organisation, has assumed a new form, which Ahmed prefers to call 'hyper-*asabiyya*' (distorted and dangerous form of *asabiyya*), denoting an obsessive loyalty to the group What is more, in this changed world of '*fitna*' (chaos) and '*shar*' (conflict), exaggerated tribal and religious loyalties are expressed through hostility and violence towards the other, resulting in a changed notion of honour as well Honour, that once meant doing good deeds and defending the weak, is

now being associated with acts of violence and taking revenge only Ahmed views 'September 11' a result of hyper-*asabiyya*, and argues that the hijackers had a distorted understanding of religion and honour. However, this phenomenon is not restricted to the Muslim world only, what with President George Bush responding to the 'attacks on his nation as a man of honour bent on vengeance'

In the present 'postmodern', 'post-human', 'post-honour' world, where does the notion of 'honour' stand and with what connotations? In fact, the process of globalisation, which mainly serves the interests of the American society, has a direct bearing on ideas of honour. Global developments have robbed many people of honour due to rapid technological changes from the West, with materialism and consumerism literally pushing the people into the new world of 'risk culture', 'panic culture', or a 'post-honour world'. Therefore, hyper-*asabiyya*, or the present excessive loyalty, is both cause and symptom of the post-honour world in which we live. Interestingly, Ahmed sees McDonalds, a symbol of the American culture, to be widely associated with globalisation. Even the present religious revivalism is viewed by the author as a consequence of the processes of and transformations resulting from globalisation, and, as a result, anomic individuals, unable to cope with the conflict between modernity and tradition, seek shelter in religion to provide certainty in an uncertain world, but only in its aberrations.

How to move out of this situation and recreate a humanistic idea of honour? The answer lies in the idea and practice of the dialogue of civilisations with a view to understand each other. First, the Muslims must stop seeing a global conspiracy against them. At the same time, the West should also understand that Muslim societies are in a state of turmoil as a consequence of the breakdown in social cohesion and the resulting sense of anomie. The West can even help Muslims rebuild their sense of dignity and honour. Simple theory, simple analysis, and simple solution. Yet in reality, how difficult to apply?

Despite its loose conceptual framework, this book is an honest effort to gain an insight into the present world of disorder marked by violence and hatred. In this endeavour Ahmed is equally critical of both the Muslims and the non-Muslims, thereby presenting an objective view of the scenario.

Islam is under siege and the Muslim community is going through a crisis, but conflicts or transformations have always led to rich literary work. Even the post-War literary boom in France was seen by Jean Paul Sartre as a 'product of the interaction of the humanism of the past with

the revolt and despair of the present' Will the history repeat itself in this case as well, is yet to be seen Well, we are waiting!

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**Anshu Malhotra** *Gender, caste, and religious identities Restructuring class in colonial Punjab* New Delhi Oxford University Press, 2002, xi + 231 pp, Rs 545 (hb) ISBN 0-19-565648-2

This book describes the tenuous relationship between caste, class, modernisation process and the worsening status of women as a direct result of the strengthening of male norms during the colonial period The tone is set from the introductory chapter itself which highlights how caste identity, despite reforms and modernisation, continued to dominate daily life At the same time, the male dominance over women also remained not only unaffected, despite the political, social and cultural changes around them, but the focus shifted even more on controlling the women's sexuality The newly emerging socioreligious identity for women, in fact, went on to provide them with a rigid code of conduct

Chapter 1 discusses how the colonial state's division of Punjabis on the three bases of religion, occupation and caste paved the way for the way the Punjabis redefined themselves The British found it convenient for administrative purposes to give caste a rigid form As a countermove, the Punjabis too tried to strengthen or reform the traditional structure of caste system Sadly, all three efforts meant a reinvention of the women's status and role Chapters 2 and 3 present a stark picture of the ways in which the women and girl child (including the unborn foetus) were treated in a highly patriarchal society, all in the name of maintaining a high moral code The practices prevalent in those times (and indeed even today!)—infanticide, dowry, bride price, the *pun/takka/vatta/chadar andazi* forms of marriage—all were indicators of the low status of women and of control over their sexuality by men In the debate regarding the widow remarriage, the views for or against were still rooted in determining the caste status Chapter 4 describes the development of the stereotypes of *pativrata* wife and a godlike husband, both of which entailed a gradual erosion of women's economic, sexual and social liberty Even the reformers idealised the women as submissive and servile Chapter 5 traces how the Punjabi popular culture or the people's

cultural practices such as visits to *pirs* or *siyapa* ceremonies at the time of death appeared as a threat to the patriarchal set-up resulting in further attempts by the men to confine their women inside the four walls of the house

The book is a treatise on a multitude of relationships—caste, class, religious, political and, above all, gender. It brings into focus the process of reinvention of their own culture and society by the Punjabis during the colonial times as a defence against the derision and criticism showered on them by the British. Unfortunately, this revision also revolved around resituating women in the caste, class and religious realms in more stringent terms. Simply put, the display of women's roles as defined by the patriarchal ideology became the indices of high caste and middle class status. The author must be congratulated for tackling a highly complex theme with competence and sensitivity. Despite its multiple strands, the discourse does not lose the focus. However, by necessity, it concentrates on the upper castes and classes, overlooking the most oppressed section, namely, the lower caste and class women who tend to remain invisible in most works on gender. Also, the state seems to be given too much importance in this process of the reassertion of the patriarchal ideology. Agreed, the British administration may have contributed to the resurgence of the patriarchal norms, but this phenomenon has occurred in the western societies as well, as has been shown by Lieteke van Vucht Tissen in Bryan S. Turner's anthology *Theories of modernity and postmodernity* (London: Sage Publications, 1990), and seems to be related more to the advent of modernisation than to a conspiracy (or, as the author terms it, 'collusion') between the British imperialists and the Punjabi patriarchs. That said, this book gives us a peek into times gone by, but remains relevant even in today's times, as it provides us a deeper understanding of women's status and predicaments that have remained timeless.

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**Bert N. Adams and R.A. Sydie** *Sociological theory* New Delhi: Vistaar Publications, 2002, xxx + 612 + 23 pp, Rs 490 (pb). ISBN 81-7829-219-X

The unprecedented changes at the close of the last century have produced an exciting turn for sociological theory. The collapse of established

theories and the emergence of new perspectives have made sociology experience 'plenty of divisiveness'. Amid the countless specialties and viewpoints, the 'geniuses of the old' remain germane. The book under review is an exploration of the journey of sociological theory from modern to present times. Chronologically and intellectually, the book is organised in such a way that the themes based on class, race, gender, methods and critiques form a common plank, so that it is possible to relate the different theoretical perspectives concerning change and continuity.

The book begins with a confessional preface that the 'dead white male approach' to the narration of social theory has remained paramount. It has not only excluded voices of the 'others', but also ignored the women theorists, as well. Therefore, the approach to social thought has remained 'at least incomplete, if not insidious'. The inclusion of this representation, the book claims, is a rediscovery of more than the 'usual aspects'. This makes the book stimulating while searching for explanations and uniformities amidst terminations.

The book is organised in twenty-four chapters containing a wealth of material on significant sociological theories giving 'substantial treatment of more than forty-five thinkers, marked distinctly through two phases, pre- and post-1930 periods. The text is concise and the narrative is lucid, capturing the vast diversity of ideas, historical contexts and formulations of individual thinkers. The break in the periods is primarily a split in the classical and contemporary theories prompted by the social developments of the 1930s and onwards.

The classical theorists shared the vision of the Enlightenment. They were obsessed with the triumph of reason, and they searched through deductive and inductive reasoning to grasp the social reality. These early theorists presumed that the social world could be studied in the same manner as the natural world and social laws could be akin to the natural laws. The discipline of sociology emerged focusing on the idea of social transformation. The first theorisation in sociology about social change the book credits to Saint-Simon, Comte and Martineau. The inclusion of Martineau as a profound positivist is a discovery that other authors of sociological theory have not acknowledged. Martineau not only translated Comte's work, but also put her own thesis that 'knowledge of fact inducing the discovery of laws was the eternal basis of wisdom and human morality of peace'. Since the gender construction in classical theories was based on the assumption of two-sex theory, women were more or less subdued in patriarchy.

Once positivism became the foundation of sociological research, the discipline developed in two branches (i) the conservative theory of evolutionism and functionalism, and (ii) the radical theory of Marxism, and Marxism extended to Lenin and Luxemburg to form radical anti-capitalism. While, one took the motif of history in equilibrium and functional relationships, the other emphasised dialectics and antagonism. However, the sociological theories of 'complexity and form' put forth by Max Weber, Marianne Weber, and Georg Simmel found fault with the positivists, and stressed that the objectivity of natural sciences model does not apply to the formulation of sociological research. Sociologists must try to understand and approximate causation. Weber's emphasis on the two crucial characteristics of modern capitalism—(i) the institutional conditions and the role of entrepreneurs in setting the economic enterprise in motion, and (ii) the goal rationality created by the scientism—paved a way for the inter-war developments in sociology.

The sociological theories of politics and economics of Pareto, Michels, Veblen and Schumpeter produced skepticism of self-destruction of capitalism. The disillusionment with modernity and shared pessimism about the transformative society are clearly reflected in the work of critical theorists. Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Fromm shared the critical Marxist perspective, but endorsed 'a common view of revolutionary practice'. Devastated by the experiences of Holocaust, their theoretical critique was not simply a way of making sense of the facts, it was also a way of helping individuals to see and understand what 'is' and in doing what 'might be'. While these critical sociologists recognised class divisions in the society, they failed to provide a systematic analysis of class. On gender, the critical theorists believed that modernity has taken off the feminine principle. They argued that the escape from the 'iron cage' can be accomplished only by 'Great Refusal'. This produced a renewed version of Marxism generating the concepts like hegemony, state apparatus, and role of superstructure taking into account race, class, gender and the shape of social formations. Rejecting these isolated boundaries and cleavages, World System analysis does not focus on class within nation-state as a category of exploitation, but 'primarily on the world capitalist system that has emerged since the rise of capitalism and moves through the periods of long and short waves'.

Amidst these disillusionments, Habermas appears to be an optimistic evolutionary, placing emphasis on communicative rationality with the development of the ideal speech situation. According to him, the consensus could be possible if 'correct procedural norms are followed'.



This abridgment is built on the relevance of micro theories born out of the collapse of functionalism and the bankruptcy of Marxism. These theories take account of the infinitely small interactions in 'cast and recast of social world'. The regular day-to-day interactions and everyday methods have remained unmarked in mega theories, because of being too obvious and uncared for in the era of ideologies.

With the concern that social order is not final, there has been a reassessment of modernity and a rummage around the construction of modernity. In the process of deconstruction, Foucault's subjects and objects of knowledge, his reflections on power and domination, as the subjectivity of history, shed new light on the classical sociological theories. The new social and political conscience created by the post-Cold-War developments has made the other voices in sociological theory equally significant.

The inclusion of new theorists and the adding of recent themes on gender and race have enlarged the scope of the book. The concluding chapter, 'Final thoughts of sociological theory', brings out the dominant contemporary complex debates at breakneck speed to close the journey of the book. The tapered edges of 'given categories' produce unnecessary bumps to an otherwise smooth sailing journey of sociological theory.

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**Bhargavi V. Davar (ed.)** *Mental health from a gender perspective*  
New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001, 427 pp., Rs 595 (hb) ISBN 0-7619-9477-7

*Mental health from a gender perspective* edited by Bhargavi V. Davar is an outcome of a multidisciplinary seminar, represented by feminists, health professionals, academicians and user groups, reflecting on the many layers of convergence and divergence of ideas on gender and mental health. Its message is that mental illness is a category of social discourse and a discursive item deployed in social negotiations, and not simply a matter of diagnostic classification or of policy formulation. The wide range of key issues that generated intellectual debate in the volume concerns the personal, interpersonal, cultural, experiential and institutional meanings of being labelled as mentally ill, rather than about the

facts of being so. This volume acknowledges the fact that diagnosis and psychiatric labelling need deconstruction from the gender perspective, its seventeen chapters examine the politics of mental health.

To comprehend the conceptual nuances of gender and mental health discourse, the volume is organised into four parts. The chapters in each part are organised on the basis of epistemological position of the discourse, ranging from the realist position to the anti-realist, phenomenological, hermeneutic and deconstructionist positions. This book is, thus, a milestone in conceptualising negotiations in each discipline to resolve the epistemological tensions while addressing key issues in the domain of women and mental health. The contributions with the realist epistemologies believe that mental illness is natural and that it can be identified with diagnostic or explanatory paradigms of behavioural science. Societal oppression and marginalisation are found to be accidental without rational foundations. Departing from this approach, feminist-realists view that the social world is gendered, and advocate the need to view women's mental health issues within the structural framework. They exhibit the commitment to communitarian philosophy and people-centred approach to counter structural and ideological dimensions of women's oppression.

The deliberations under Part I throw light on the theoretical, methodological and contextual issues regarding women and mental health. All the theories employed in clinical practice—psychodynamic theories, cognitive theories, behavioural theories, human existential theories and family system theories—are stated to be gender biased or gender insensitive. Coupled with this, scientific practices embodying value neutrality in clinical practice are proved to re-establish gender hierarchy and male supremacy. The universal assertion of victim blaming not only endorses male dominance, but also predisposes public to accept psychological assertions as political truism. This part holds a mirror to the crucial assessment of value neutrality in positivistic approach. The essential outcome of the debate is an appeal to the professionals in clinical practice to disengage themselves from the shared assumptions about the gender issues in mental health as reality and to develop alternate conceptualisation of reality. Also, this part contains the widely debated issues regarding, conceptual analysis of the linkages between psychological state and structural position of women. The strategic recommendation made in this Part to integrate individualism of psychology with political collectivism of feminism, and of the feminist network with clinical perspective is apposite.

The Part II brings out the linkages between body, reproduction and mental health. Though clustering of chapters in this part lacks coherence in the intellectual position, an attempt is made here to generate debate on biological versus cultural determinism. It points out the under-recognition of reciprocity of psychiatric syndromes and reproductive functions. The complex interplay of physiological and psychosocial factors are brilliantly essayed through in-depth analyses of the impact of physiological change and gynaecological pathology on mental health and the implications of pre-existing psychiatric problems for reproductive health. Community and public health perspective of mental health is another dimension brought out, emphasising the need for the integration of mental health services at primary health care level.

Part III, exploring the linkages between domestic violence and mental health, begins with the conceptual analysis of marital violence and deals with the cognitive, behavioural and development aspects of domestic violence. In this part, self-discourse has taken a centre stage and it is viewed as a process by which private grievance is given a public voice through clinic, community network and women's collectives. Self-discourse is proclaimed as a form of resistance, public protest and personal overcoming. Even empowering therapeutic dimensions of self-discourse is well demonstrated in this part.

The triangular relationship between women, society and mental illness is interestingly portrayed in the concluding part (IV) of the book. This part analyses the discursive interface between social institutions and women's mental lives on the one hand, and normative construction of femininity and psychiatric disorder, on the other. Using case study combined with social constructionist approach, it explains how patriarchal standards of femininity condition the illness experience, perception, articulation and behaviour of the patient as well as that of the significant others. It highlights the interpretive lag between judicial readings of narratives serving patriarchal interests and personal distress narratives of women. The message of the last chapter is that the media is no exception in reinforcing sex-role stereotypes.

This book transcends many pervasive myths, ideologies and unquestioned assumptions regarding gender and mental health.

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**G.S. Bajpai (ed.)** *Development without disorders Criminological viewpoints* Sagar (MP) Vishwavidyalaya Prakashan, 2002, xi + 381 pp, Rs 990 (hb) ISBN 81-88289-03-5

The key question briefing this volume is whether development can ever be achieved without disorder. Its contributors seek to answer this question from a criminological perspective. The volume is about the interplay of development, crime and criminal justice administration. The message that one gets from it is, as the editor G S Bajpai puts it, 'there seems a worldwide consensus that development at any cost is not affordable. Gaining or losing ought to be in a logical balance. Criminological implications of development can now be overlooked only at the cost of rising criminality' (p. v).

The nineteen articles in the volume are divided into two sections: I - 'Development, social change and crime: Interplay and implications', and II - 'Criminal justice administration: Developmental trends'. The appendix focuses on the 'Guiding principles for crime prevention and criminal justice in the context of development and new international economic order'.

Section-I deals with the question whether the failure of governments in ensuring a sustainable economy and achieving growth with social justice has created conditions unleashing collective violence in several regions of the world. The discussion begins with Ananta K. Giri's paper on the imperatives of developmental ethics and aesthetic mode of participation. The ethical or aesthetic aspects of development are discussed in terms of 'self-reflection/self-empowerment or self-development'. The argument centres around the postmodernist thought and its thinkers through a dialogue with scholars such as Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, Charles Taylor, Louis Dumont, Denis Goulet and others.

The next two articles by M Z Khan and S P Srivastava focus on the developmental process and its consequences for crime. For these scholars, conflict, violence and crime are the growing social problems faced by the country today—an outcome of the interplay of development and disorder. The assertion here is that techno-economic development and social disparity have their 'criminogenic' fallout. As Khan says, 'poverty is bad but disparity is worse—highly criminogenic' (p. 36). The causal matrix of such assumptions, as Khan and Srivastava both argue, is 'development', and has to be understood in the wider socio-economic context. The rapid pace of technological advancement and socioeconomic transformation has brought about certain criminogenic

influences and an increased sophistication of the means of committing crimes

The next two articles by Kurrey, and Wossener and Prinsloo provide an international scenario (Germany and South Africa) of 'development and crime' These articles may not have a direct bearing on the Indian scene, but they give a cross-cultural perspective for a better understanding of the phenomenon

R. Thilagraj and M B. Pavithra explore how the wayward industrialisation in the country has become a serious threat to its environment and public health The valueless industrial prosperity has created a culture of consistent destruction of nature The dumping of toxic landfill and garbage resulting in offensive odour and chemical smoke is a few examples of air pollution and contamination of water and soil For these scholars, these are the outcomes of capitalist economic system, encouraged by the greedy and opportunist corporate sector to pursue its selfish motive of profit making Such consistent environmental degradation, resource depletion, toxicity, and deterioration of overall quality of development raise ethical issues, as initially stated by Giri

The papers by R S Srivastava, J K Pattanaik, and S Tandon reiterate similar issues on the 'development-crime' debate Perspectives on social change are discussed in these papers in different contexts Srivastava touches upon the wider context of technological advancement and socioeconomic changes in the country that have led to the vicious circle of crime, deviance and other symptoms of social and cultural anomie and alienation For these scholars, an understanding of the larger socioeconomic and cultural forces is necessary to overcome such problems. On similar lines, Pattanaik and Tandon analyse the consequences of the developmental process for female criminality and older people and their life situations respectively

Focusing on the specific forms of crime and criminal behaviour, Arvind Verma examines the changing scenario of politics and the growth of white-collar crime in the country In their articles, Navin Kumar and R K Pathak provide interesting documentation of 'cyber crime' in urban India They focus on Information Technology and its increasing vulnerability or victimisation through such crimes Kumar's paper states how the banking organisation has become the easiest target for cyber criminals. Pathak deals with the ethical aspect of cyber crimes He mentions several computer-related operations or actions that may or may not be called as crimes This raises an entirely different approach to and the need for redefining 'computer crimes'

Section II deals with the criminal justice system (CJS) and its loopholes, and advances ideas to strengthen a suitable CJS for the country. 'Restorative justice' is a popular and functional concept in the UK and the USA, Bajpai emphasises the need to implement this idea in India as a useful mechanism for victim-oriented CJS. P. P. Singh identifies the problems in CJS practices in the country. A. Tiwari and Soma Sundaram deal with the role of prison and correctional administration in the country. An interesting account of the activism of the media in relation to the CJS is provided by Deswal. A. K. Gupta deals with medical negligence and its criminal liability from the human rights and victimological point of view.

This volume is a mixed outcome in the field of criminology. The scanty literature on the subject in India is enriched to some extent, as the papers here offer a new dimension to the understanding of crime and its prevention. However, most of the papers lack empirical rigour, and are based on conjectures and descriptive information. Giri's paper oscillates from Foucault to Gandhi (and Tagore), but more through rhetoric than any resemblance in two kinds of realities under the focus of these great thinkers.

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**Jasbir Jain and Sudha Rai (eds.)** *Films and feminism: Essays in Indian cinema*. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2002, 280 pp., Rs 525 (hb). ISBN 81-7033-713-5

The discourse on gender/feminism is an integral part of contemporary social and literary theories and, to extend further, film theory, too. Given the proliferation of the visual media in modern life, it is important to locate the space occupied by gender (women) within it, more so in the realm of cinema. Films, by virtue of their wider audience reach, not only reflect and reaffirm, but also interrogate social and gender images and stereotypes.

*Films and feminism* seeks to explore 'meaningfully' the 'gendered' space in cinema, highlighting both its inner-workings and outward interactions vis-à-vis literary-aesthetics or written narratives. Edited by Jasbir Jain and Sudha Rai, this book is a collection of twenty-four essays which reflect on the 'politics' of projection of women in the Indian cinematic tradition. However, the editors are careful not 'to project any linear

account of the gender question' (p 11) Their aim is 'to put together different responses and interpretations of the cotemporary gender scene in the world of movies' (*Ibid*)

Although the essays cover wide-ranging themes and perspectives, they are interconnected by the common *raison d'être* of the book—the dynamics of portrayal of the 'feminine' in both mainstream and parallel cinema in India. Some essays show how the parallel cinema, contrary to popular perception, often fails to acknowledge and treat women as 'subjects'. Interestingly, it is the mainstream cinema which often carries out the otherwise 'unexpected' task.

Focusing broadly on the nature of directorial treatment of 'women' and their issues in cinema are the contributions by Somdatta Mandal, Dipendu Chakrabarti, Jyoti Bhatia and Sudha Rai. Mandal's and Bhatia's essays are particularly interesting. The former looks at filmmaker Rituparno Ghosh's works as responsive and sensitive to women, while the latter discusses Sai Paranjape's cinema to unearth the inter-linkage of gender and comedy and consequently project positive and non-victimised images of women.

The journey of women in search of their subjective selves is what Anshoo Sharma, Tripti Jain, Bandana Chakrabarty and Veena Singh explore in their essays. While interrogating the cinematic projections of such 'sacred' institutional spaces as marriage and family, Chakrabarty and Singh rework not only the spaces but the identities of women therein. Along somewhat similar lines, though restricting to single-film analysis, Veena Jain, Ranju Mehta and Rakesh Thakur trace the trajectory of women's protests against oppressive patriarchal structures. Mehta's in-depth study of Mahesh Manjrekar's *Astitva* deserves a mention for its clear and mature analysis.

The agenda of patriarchy not only involves the construction of the feminine 'self', but also the body and sexuality, and both are seen as potential threats to patriarchal hegemonic practices. In this backdrop, the women of the Indian cinema are projected either as passive collaborators or rebels and transgressors of boundaries imposed by patriarchy. The essays by Mini Nanda, Jasbir Jain, Bindu Nair, Meenu Bhambani, Santosh Gupta and Renuka Pamecha dwell on films which, otherwise diverse, reflect on exploitation of the female body, rape and its consequences, and disabled women, on the one hand, and on women as sexually conscious subjects and not mere victims of male aggression, on the other. Jasbir Jain's well-worked essay examines the female body as 'text' and pertinently points out the distinction as well as overlap of the categories of victims, rebels and transgressors. Gupta's exploration of

the relationship between a girl-child and hermaphrodite vis-à-vis patriarchy in Mahesh Bhatt's *Tamanna* demonstrates the existence of non-patriarchal, alternative spaces in the social world

The projection of women as repositories of cultural and moral values is nowhere more prominent than in the Indian cinema. Consequently, women as bearers of the virtues of tradition are portrayed not only as mothers and goddesses, but also as ones identifiable with nationalism and the nation-state (the *Bharat Mata*). Madhuri Chatterjee and Anu Celly analyse Satyajit Ray's *Devī* to highlight the projection of women as goddesses, while Gita Viswanath and Supriya Agarwal focus on the agenda of the Hindu Right vis-à-vis the cinematic representation of women in general and Muslim women in particular.

Finally, the three essays by Malati Mathur, Brinda Mathur, and Krishna Rathore examine (i) the audience perspective regarding the cinematic portrayal of the 'aggressive eve-teasing and courtship patterns' (p. 12) and representation of the ever-sacrificing mother, and (ii) the concept of female solidarity as a source of protest and change. Rathore reads Ketan Mehta's apparently simple, yet powerful rural narrative *Mirch Masala* to uncover its underlying themes of female empowerment and solidarity. However, critical analysis suggests that woman characters in this film do not emerge as independent women, but only as strong ones who uphold their moral selves within conventional patriarchal spaces.

This book is a good attempt only in so far as inclusion of certain individual essays is concerned. As a compilation of twenty-four essays, it is too ambitious a venture. The editors could have settled for fewer but more rigorously worked essays. Moreover, the 'Introduction' of such a bulky volume should have been more analytical and thought provoking, if not long. Most of the essays, as the editors themselves confess, are not grounded in film theory. Not surprisingly, they often appear as simplistic and commonsensical ones to the reviewer. Nevertheless, the book is an achievement of sorts, for it adds to the not-so-large corpus of literature on films and feminism in India.

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**John A. Hughes, Wes W. Sharrock and Peter J. Martin:** *Understanding classical sociology Marx, Weber, Durkheim* London Sage Publications, 2003 (2nd edition), viii + 246 pp, £ 18 99 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-5467-8

and

**Wes W. Sharrock, John A. Hughes and Peter J. Martin:** *Understanding modern sociology* London Sage Publications, 2003, vi + 220 pp, £ 18 99 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-5707-3

The authors of the two volumes being reviewed deserve to be complimented for bringing out a crisp, concise and critical account of the journey of sociological theory from classical thought to contemporary theory. The two volumes run in a chronological order, and bring out the development of modern sociological theory as an intellectual response of sensitive and extremely influential minds to the socioeconomic, political and philosophical events taking place in history, as a sequence rather than a disjointed process. One point that is repeatedly made in the two books is that the actual course of sociology was driven by sociopolitical developments more than by the inner logic of its intellectual development. The authors aptly emphasise that it is an oversimplification to claim that the macro theories and grand narratives—for example, Marxism or functionalism—have become redundant, rejected altogether by the more recent discourses such as symbolic interactionism and post-structuralism. They show the strong linkages and continuities between Marxism and structuralism, Durkheimian positivism and symbolic interactionism, and so on.

The volume on classical sociology erases many ill-conceived notions about such thinkers as Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim. That Marx, instead of abandoning Hegelian scheme, did a reworking of his central ideas, preserving them in his theory, is clearly demonstrated. The popular divergence between Marx and Weber, especially in the context of understanding of history, is, in fact, an oversimplification, as the authors prove. Both Marx and Weber argue that the historical change is caused not by any unfolding of the logic of ideas, but through the activities of real, striving human beings, acting in pursuit of their interests. Moreover, the presentation of Weber's methodology, by linking it with Kantian philosophy, makes it interesting and simple, especially for the students.

Durkheim's idea of society, conventionally presented as a polarity between individual and society, in favour of the latter, is discussed as the setting together and keeping apart of individuals, their inclusion and

exclusion Durkheim is presented as a scholar whose contribution lies in his theoretical ideas about the nature of society and social life, the sources of social solidarity, and the social origins of the structure of our thought, rather than simply as one who tried to develop a quantitative method of social research

The second volume deals with the 'middle period' of sociology, that is, between 1920 and 1960 The difference between classical sociology and modern sociology is that the former was dominated by individual thinkers, while the latter by 'schools' Starting with the origin of 'functionalism' (both in British Anthropology and American sociology), the authors refute the most common charges against Talcott Parsons' theory of functionalism, that it failed to deal with social change and that it over-emphasised the functionality of every segment of society They argue 'doubting that society was not driven by fierce class struggle was not the same as thinking there was an absence of the political tensions' (p 44) Parsons' theory played a major part in shaping the subsequent course of sociology—'consensus versus conflict', and 'structure versus agency' The contemporary theoretical work of Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu and Jurgen Habermas is primarily directed towards the second theme

The aspirations of the scholars in the Frankfurt School, on the other hand, were not as much concerned with the development of academic sociology, as with the wider dimensions of sociology, and they made important contributions to economics, politics, history, psychiatry, literature, music, etc Much of what they said could be traced back to Marx and Weber, especially on the theme of alienation Weber was a major influence on Neo-Marxists in the Frankfurt School who questioned many Marxian assumptions and predictions One difference between Marx and Weber that had tremendous implications on the emerging sociological theory was that 'Marx was concerned with domination through class, the domination by the few of the many, whereas Weber was concerned with the domination of all by the demands of rationality' (p 68) The Frankfurt School, drawing upon Marx's theory of alienation, Weber's analysis of rationalisation and Georg Simmel's notion of 'tragedy of culture', contributed significantly to the development of contemporary cultural studies

Opposite to the rational, intentional aptitude of the Weberian actor, structuralism focused on the unconscious, resulting in the 'decentring' of the individual This theme was further stretched by post-structuralists like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault who innovated the 'deconstructionist approach' The abstract, grand theorising was replaced by the

school of symbolic interactionism which emphasised building theory based on substantial knowledge of how social life was lived

The authors conclude by arguing that it is wrong to say that classical sociology produced by thinkers like Marx, Weber and Durkheim has become redundant. On the contrary, most of the recent and so-called progressive intellectual developments, particularly critical theory and structuralism, represent a reworking of the classical ideas, resulting in an unfolding of sociology's intellectual tradition. It is, in fact, just not possible to understand sociology as it stands today without going into the classical thought, as the contemporary theory has originated out of it. The authors end the discussion on an optimistic note saying that divergent perspectives in sociology only point at the different ways from which social reality can be looked at, it hardly implies a disagreement that is unproductive.

These two books are a must for a beginner as well as experts in sociology. They not only depict the theoretical strands in the discipline, they also present a stand point from which sociological theory can be reviewed with much ease and interest.

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**John W. Berry, R.C. Mishra and R.C. Tripathi (eds.)** *Psychology in human and social development: Lessons from diverse cultures (A Festschrift for Durganand Sinha)* New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, 310 pp, Rs 295 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-9535-8

This book is a collection of papers presented at a symposium organised to honour Durganand Sinha, a leading psychologist in the country, and his efforts to bring the issues of development to the centre stage in psychology. The *Festschrift* highlights Sinha's view that the development of science in any country should be in tune with the sociocultural realities of life of its people.

In the opening essay, A C Paranjpe says that in contemporary western thought positivism is declared dead, the idea of progress through technology is questioned. Philosophy has taken a hermeneutic turn, and Euro-American psychology is following suit. The rise of an interpretive social science and hermeneutic psychology signals the prospect of a holistic understanding of alien cultures. With its own rich tradition of

textual interpretation and its practical use in personal edification, India has much to offer to enrich hermeneutic and existential psychologies

Paranjpe feels that reliance on the western ways in psychology—and in many other fields as well—assumes that technological advancement of western cultures is the epitome of ‘progress’ that is worth emulating. In his writings, in the mid-1960s, Sinha noted that, in their work, most Indian psychologists used American models and had largely ignored the rich intellectual legacy of their own culture. In Paranjpe’s opinion, the anti-philosophical and anti-religious stance of behaviourist and other varieties of modern psychology is a major impediment to the acceptability of psychological thought indigenous to Asian cultures.

Laying stress on the need for contextualised research in psychology, R. C. Mishra says that when problems of mental health among tribal children are studied, the tests should be culturally appropriate and sensitive to the demands of the cognitive life of children in their sociocultural milieu. T. S. Saraswati thinks that there is a need for introspection and soul searching by child development professionals to surmount the valid criticism that the knowledge base in child development, as it exists today, leans heavily on the western contributions and is neither ecoculturally sensitive nor valid in the Indian setting.

In a similar vein, Shalini Bharat examines the concern of family researchers whether ‘new families’ are emerging in urban India in the context of a changing world order in which women’s participation in the economy, mass displacement of populations and families, experimentations with lifestyles and alternative family forms are some significant social trends. She thinks that the findings have to be interpreted in the light of the overpowering influence of traditional beliefs and expectations about sex roles and marital patterns in contemporary Indian society.

In their study of highly industrialised Asian cities like Hong Kong, Henry S. R. Kao and Ng Sek Hong find that there is a seemingly integrated mix of cultural values derived from both oriental and western sources, and these hybrid values are espoused by many business and public organisations. In spite of the scientific and technocratic appearance of these imported (western) tools for managing human incentive and staff motivation and discipline, it seems that most of the Hong Kong enterprises of Chinese capital administer a reward and incentive mechanism that is simple to understand and appreciate by the workforce.

Illustrative of an emerging consensus among psychologists today for the development of indigenous psychologies is the theme of by Kim’s essay. Kim points out the major differences between the Euro-American

cultural values and those of East Asia and other developing societies. The Euro-American cultural values stress rational, liberal, individualistic and abstract ideals, while the more collectivistic societies, such as those in Asia, stress collective identity, emotional dependence, group solidarity, etc. The mid-1960s' 'community psychology' in the USA combined the key aspects of both these value orientations.

R C Tripathi underlines the changes psychology has undergone since the 1960s. Then, it was believed that the business of psychology was to discover causal relationships to enable scientists to shape the behaviour of individuals in desirable directions. Today, the focus seems to have shifted from behaviour to meaning. Tripathi examines the problems associated with the notions of social change and development, and attempts to fuse the local with the universal. He distinguishes change from development in terms of two criteria, namely, openness and embeddedness.

The crucial argument that runs through all the papers in this volume concerns the significance of contextualisation of psychological development. This argument stresses the importance of the cultural context and contributes a valuable interdisciplinary insight.

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**Kushal Deb (ed.)** *Mapping multiculturalism* Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2002, 317 pp, Rs 550 (hb) ISBN 81-7033-708-9

This volume attempts to study multiculturalism by setting up a comparison between Canada and India broadly concerning issues of nationalism seen from the perspective of minority rights. It is divided into two parts—conceptual issues and ethnographic case material.

One theme that I found particularly interesting was the discussion of the concept of culture itself. It brings to the fore issues of membership within a collective so that we must ask how responsive we are as citizens to multiple ways of being and how do we define 'difference' in practice. In this light Carol Upadhyaya's paper is interesting because she examines 'cultural' difference from two contrasting perspectives—social relativism, as it is used in anthropology, and multiculturalism. Anthropologists, she says, are often uncomfortable with the inherent risk of reification that multiculturalism carries. Culture can be viewed as the property of a bounded group. But equally is the risk that anthropology bears—the

unconscious association of culture with a kind of collective property right, which could be read as a new and unstated form of racism. She does not attempt to do so in this paper, but an interesting theme that could be developed from her argument is about the appropriation of anthropology by the discourse of identity politics. Sarah Joseph, in fact, does address this, and shows how members of minority communities in multicultural states are often perceived only in terms of a homogeneous identity.

Sasheej Hegde takes up this issue via the work of Charles Taylor. He juxtaposes 'pluralism' with 'multiculturalism', two different though overlapping ideas in the discourse of politics, and develops a critique of liberal, multicultural politics in the process. Valerian Rodrigues opposes multiculturalism with globalisation, arguing that the former may serve as a force of constraint against the homogenising tendencies that inevitably accompany globalisation. Rajeiv Bhargava elaborates on the concept of multiculturalism as a form of sociality and stresses the importance of theorising the version that is present in modern India. Achin Vanaik's paper is in the second section of this volume, which relates to multiculturalism in comparative perspective. However, it raises many abstract issues and should be discussed with the papers in the first section. Vanaik argues that the resurgence of religiopolitical movements and academic critiques of Indian debates on secularism from the vantage point of communitarian perspectives are symptomatic of and, even a reaction to, widespread disillusionment with the goals of modernisation, rather than because of any inherent trans-historical promise that such movements may make. For Indians, therefore, it becomes imperative to preserve and strengthen the value of secularism for the regeneration of both state and civil society.

The second part of the volume is divided between papers on Canada and India. David Waterfall points out that, in spite of Canada's checkered history as far as multiculturalism is concerned, it is one of the few nations that has an official policy concerning multiculturalism. This, paradoxically, may be due to the absence of a powerful Canadian national identity. Kushal Deb argues that the official policy of multiculturalism serves as an ideological device that can be used by the government to facilitate the assimilation of immigrant populations as well in mediating the political differences between the French and the English Canadians. In fact, this policy is used to restrain the growing demands of the French Canadians and their unique interpretation of their cultural history. Narendra Bokhare shows how the policy of multiculturalism in Canada allows its indigenous communities to practice a politics of

difference while at the same time claiming membership in a 'unicultural' society so as to qualify for the same rights as other citizens. None of the papers deals with questions of citizenship directly, which is unfortunate, as this might have sharpened the discussion on multiculturalism and the constitution of a national identity.

The last three papers in the volume are on India. The fact that they are from different disciplinary perspectives—namely, history, anthropology, and sociology—makes the section on India much more varied than the one on Canada. This is inevitable, I suppose, given the state of comparative studies in India. Aloka Parasher-Sen goes to India's pre-modern traditions to examine the kind of stake that India may have in pluralism itself. From this vantage point she says that the project of the modern Indian nation state in combining cultural pluralism with a hard-core centre may be doomed to failure. Traditionally, categories of social otherness like '*mlechha*' or '*yavana*' have no fixed meaning. They have to be given a contextual signification so that who an outsider is depends on his or her relationship to the wider society. Thus, one's ruler is never thought to be a *mlechha*.

Jan Brouwer, whose scholarship is at the confluence of Indology and sociology, says that the endeavour to map multiculturalism in the Indian context demands an insight into the traditional mode of dealing with multiculturalism through the *varna* system of segregation. He also says that this project requires a reexamination of concepts tied to our understanding of the modern Indian state vis-à-vis multiculturalism, such as 'civil society' and the 'public domain'. The Indian state has to struggle with the fact that there is no traditional notion of congregation that would allow for an articulation of the public domain that is not based on communitarianism. Brouwer may have a point here, but I feel that his conception of Indian tradition is confined to a model of ancient India presented by Indology. Medieval religious traditions in India, like Sikhism and even forms of Bhakti like Chaitanya Vaishnavism, have experimented with the congregational mode of worship and need to be included in his discussion of civil society and the public domain.

The last paper in this volume by Surinder Jodhka highlights problems regarding the relationship between the value of equality inherent in the ideal of citizenship and the recognition of cultural and community differences in any democratic state. The recognition of individual citizenship rights has not produced equality between different communities in India. In this context, the ideology of multiculturalism may be a way of acknowledging the fact of equality between culturally distinct communities. However, an uncritical valorisation of distinctive

cultural communities carries the danger of essentialism, as Jodhka shows in terms of the enhanced perception of the Sikhs as an ethnic minority brought on by the crisis in the Indian state. He makes the point that forms of cultural essentialism always emerge in the shadow of the state. I found this last set of papers extremely interesting in terms of the issues that they brought out, more so because none of them looked at multiculturalism from the conventional contexts in which it is normally placed. However, they deserved a fuller discussion.

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**Margrit Pernau, Imtiaz Ahmad and Helmut Reifeld (eds.)** *Family and gender: Changing values in Germany and India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, 360 pp., Price not mentioned (hb) ISBN 0-7619-9618-4

This book endeavours to unpack and desentimentalise family as an institution. There is adequate cogitation in the introductory notes about drawing comparisons between India and Germany—two different socio-historical contexts, the editors remain unbolstered about this exercise. The essays, however, enable the readers to understand the distinctions and similarities between these two different contexts, albeit through a reading undertaken painstakingly.

The thirteen essays in this volume are categorised into four sections. In the first section, the essays by Imtiaz Ahmad and Vasanti Raman focus on the Indian context, while Gunilla-Frederick Budde captures the historicity and demographic transition in Europe with special reference to Germany. Though in Germany the jointness of three-generation family has completely given way to modern urban nuclear family, in India the joint-nuclear phenomenon is non-linear and complex, and it manifests regional sociocultural variations. Vasanti Raman's and Imtiaz Ahmad's essays are rich in ethnographic details of gendered socialisation practices and discursive production of men and women as gendered subjects in the familial domain.

The essays in the second section are centred on images and symbolic processes in the context of gender. Chaturvedi Badrinath gives an account of 'husband-wife' and 'mother-son' relationships depicted in *Mahabharata*. He seems to be soft in interrogating *Mahabharata*, his frame of analysis remains unreflective about the 'insidious', 'ingrained'



dimensions of power and, at best, represents a hegemonic interpretation of *Mahabharata*.

Margrit Pernau compares the imagery created in religious advice literature of German Catholicism and Indian Islam in the later half of nineteenth century. Both German Catholicism and *sharif* (Islamic) literature emphasised the housewifely and motherly qualities of women in this period. While this image enhanced (middle-class) women's agency in Germany, it did not take the Indian Muslim (elite) women beyond the mere passive agency of class and community identity. The reason Pernau cites is that, in Germany, the women, endowed with this moral power, were expected to take on the responsibility to induce their own (middle-class) men to shun drinking habits and to prevent them from being lured into the company of socialists. With no such responsibility in the public domain, the *sharif* (women) in India, though endowed with motherly and housewifely qualities, could not acquire any sense of ascendancy. The interpretation of Pernau of German middle-class women in terms of enhancement of agency though seems cogent in comparison with the *sharif* women in India, it can be problematic, as the 'motherist' logic has its own dangers from the viewpoint of feminist politics.

In her essay, Ute Frevert articulates the changing images of masculinity in Germany from the late nineteenth century to the present. It is the changing economic system, along with the requirements of the German State, which impacted upon the dominant image of masculinity. Frevert shows this with concrete historical data.

The third section of the book attempts to work out the trajectory of gender transformation initiated by the state in India and in Germany. Nandini Azad scrutinises the role of the Indian state in reworking gender equations since the colonial times, and delineates the role of women's movement in negotiating rights and justice. Shail Mayaram talks of incipient feminisation of the public sphere of panchayat because of the 72nd Amendment in India. With the help of some case studies in Rajasthan, she shows that, despite tremendous difficulties and hurdles, the presence of women in the public sphere has a transformational potential not only in the content, style and idiom of politics, but also for the sexual division of labour on which social structure is grounded.

Helmut Reifeld analyses the tensions and dialectics of increasing 'spirit of constitution' which envisages conventional marriage and family as norm and the factual change in family arrangements since the 1990s. In the post-unification period (that is, after 1990), Germany witnessed an overall decline in state protectionism, which enhanced

people's sense of insecurity. This led to a rapid decline in marriage and birth, and created conditions for alternative family arrangements like single-parent families, step families and same sex families.

The last section of the book contains three essays contributed by economist Nirmala Banarjee, historian Samita Sen, and sociologist U Vindhya. Banarjee discusses the life and problems of widows, the deserted and divorced women, and women who are the heads of households—women who are pushed towards the peripheries of its conscience in the Indian society. Sen charts the history of marginalisation of the female workforce during the colonial era and its continuing legacy in the post-colonial phase. In independent India, during the 1960s, the process of workers' unionisation and institutionalisation of collective bargaining was far from being gender-neutral, the process of organisation went hand in hand with masculinisation. Vindhya makes a meticulous survey of literature on domestic violence.

The essays in this volume are scholarly, luminous and reflective. Written with a feminist tinge, they also critically scrutinise several dominant feminist notions. There is more of the 'book work' than the use of first-hand data, which does not, however, weaken the thrust of the book. What is offered is an insightful historicising of family and gender in two different contexts from a commendable interdisciplinary perspective. The book is for all those who think of democratic families and gender just society.

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**Mike Gane:** *French social theory* London: Sage Publications, 2003, xi + 207 pp, £ 18.99 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-6831-8

*French social theory* by Mike Gane is not an introductory text, as the title may suggest, but a complex exegetical study that engages with French social thought spanning 200 years from St. Simon to Baudrillard. Drawing substantially on his own earlier published writings on individual thinkers, Gane casts his account within a fresh historical framework of three cycles, each representing a trajectory through secular towards religious thought: 1800-1880, 1880-1940, and 1940-2000. While not claiming to be exhaustive, the book, nevertheless, discusses a wide array of authors, texts, and contexts, in learned, pithy and imaginative strokes. Yet the particular reading it offers may not be uncontroversial.

In his discussion of the first cycle (1800-1880), Gane seeks to correct the tendency for modern social theory to trace the genesis of French social theory to the influence of German philosophers' reflections on French events. He looks instead at the work of St Simon and his disciples Saint-Amand Bazard and Auguste Comte, and Comte's disciple, Emile Littré, to show how French social theory went through its first phase of construction and degeneration, to be followed by a renaissance with Emile Durkheim. What makes this section very significant is the fact that Gane attempts to reconstruct the main discursive formations of French social theory as they have developed out of the St Simonian matrix. Notable here is his delineation of the complex interweaving between the post-revolutionary context and social theory. Also striking is a clarification of the precise sense in which Comte's positivism was not empiricism, since it was accompanied by an emphasis on theory and theoretical abstraction, on the role of fictions, and the construction of conjectures that invoke unobservable phenomena, which were seen as essential to all scientific and sociological imagination.

Durkheim's contribution dominates the second cycle (1880-1940), and Gane provides a deft exposition of its main features, including the contradictions inhering in it. He focuses on Durkheim's orientation to the question of social pathology (which he later compares and contrasts with that of the thinkers in the third cycle), and on disentangling the complex phenomenon of Durkheim's application in reverse, in *Suicide*, of the order of analysis prescribed in the *Rules of sociological method*. The changed direction of French sociology after Durkheim, under the leadership of Marcel Mauss, is sketched out next, including a revealing account, based on recently published material, of Mauss's political engagement. He concludes this section with a discussion of the work of Bataille in which Marxist ideas are fused with the anthropological ideas of Mauss, and in which the notion of spiritual authority from Comte remains central. How Bataille's sacred is different from that of Comte or Durkheim is clearly specified, as also how Bataille draws upon Nietzsche and Surrealism as well, to construct a heterological project for a 'sacred sociology'.

In the last and longest section of the book, Gane discusses what he terms the second rebirth of social theory, beginning with Sartre and de Beauvoir and reaching a point of crisis today. The late 1930s and 1940s are characterised as the time of a transposition by displacement of the Comte-Durkheim-Mauss variations of St Simonian thought into the Marxist idiom. Indeed, Marxism reigned through this phase, first in existential and then in structuralist form. Significantly, in his chapter on

existential theory, Gane highlights de Beauvoir's contribution, arguing that its importance has been underrated. He gives a synoptic account of her studies of gender and old age to show how her approach combines existential methods with those of positive sociology in an exemplary way. A detailed account of Lyotard's reflections on the Algerian war and on France in its aftermath, in the next chapter, anticipates a fuller discussion of the postmodern turn in social theory. That discussion is preceded, however, by two chapters that engage with the epistemological tradition represented by Canguilhem, and with structuralism, respectively. In the former, the arguments for Canguilhem's notion of normativity, and its far-reaching implications, including that of bringing philosophy centre stage in the realm of the therapeutic, are presented in some detail. The chapter on structural theory examines Kristeva, Althusser, Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari as key figures when structuralism attained its complete hegemony over social theory in France. Unfortunately, and surprisingly, for as erudite a commentator as Gane, Bourdieu has been misrepresented here as an orthodox Marxist.

It is in the work of the *fin-de-cycle* scholar Baudrillard that we encounter the term 'hypertelia' (denoting the movement of things beyond their ends), which Gane uses for the third cycle (1940-2000) of French social theory. Looking at the end of the cycle, he describes it as one in which 'on the one hand there is fragmentation (Foucault, Lyotard, Baudrillard), and neo-scholasticism (Bourdieu, Berthelot), on the other a shift towards the sacred, indeed an elective *collège sacré virtuel* (Serres, Derrida, Virilio, Irigary), even the orgy, sacred (Maffesoli) and profane (Baudrillard)' (p. 162). Choosing Baudrillard as his reference point for characterising the present, Gane concludes that the question before French social theory today is whether a St Simonian problematic, based on the struggle against poverty, exploitation and anomie, can still address issues that arise in a post-industrial society dominated by hypertelic forms: problems of obesity, saturation, fetishistic individualism and extreme phenomena. The book thereby conceptualises a vast canvas in terms which reflect the author's own preferred views, even as it draws massively upon scholarly material. In all, it provides a challenging perspective on French social theory, capable of provoking lively debates on its past trajectory, present concerns, and future forms.

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**Padmaja Sen (ed.).** *Changing tribal life A sociophilosophical perspective* New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2003, xiii + 141, Rs 250 (hb) ISBN 81-8069-023-7

This book is the outcome of a national conference organised to understand the issues related to tribal life. The broad areas chosen for the conference were 'Concept of Tribe', 'Philosophy of Tribal Life', 'Concept of Value', and 'Notion of Development'. Most of these contributions to the conference are based on ethnographic studies.

The book begins with Sen's article on the Ho, conceptualising it as a tribe. Dasgupta's article views tribal characteristics as colonial constructs that made the tribe a separate category different from the others. Hembrom talks about changes in the tribal life from non-material to material culture and so on. Hebbar gives details about the significance of myth and ritual. Mahato warns against the politico-constitutional listing of the tribes, where many are excluded from this list. He argues that the excluded groups of tribals also manifest the same features like the scheduled tribes of the region. Dasgupta and Mahato caution against the ethnocentrism and politics in identifying tribes that have structured tribal epistemology.

Sengupta views tribal identity as a label for marginalised people. This historical fact about the tribe answers the question why some groups have been included in the government list not the others. In the early twentieth century, many tribal groups (Rajbongshis, Mahto, Tharus and many others in the eastern part of the country) had claimed different statuses such as Kshatriya, Brahman and so on. In 1980s the same groups reclaimed their tribal origin and demanded to be classified as a tribe in the government list to avail the state-sponsored benefits. As we know, enlisting in the schedule is a lengthy process, and it would take time to rectify administrative errors. Now it also needs political backing.

In the Indian context the tribal identity cannot be seen in isolation or compartmentalisation, where *jana* and *jati* and forest and village coexist. This could be observed in the light of exchanges between the *arnyak* (unsettled) and *gramin* (settled). Ghosh, Verardo and Parry have focused on the exchanges between tribal and non-tribal people. Mahanta makes out a case for tribal medicine as an alternative medicine system. Guha and Sen address the concept of tribal value. Topno highlights the dichotomy between the conservationist approach and the destructive approach to the natural resources. Singh highlights the plans to ensure the development of tribes.

Sen accepts that the book does not offer a comprehensive reading on the sociophilosophical aspects of the changes in the tribal society. The volume is informative and rich in empirical insight, and it will interest academicians and researchers interested in tribal studies

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**Ragini Sen:** *We the billion A social psychological perspective on India's population* New Delhi. Sage Publications, 2003, 323 pp, Rs 480 (hb) ISBN 0-7619-9681-8

In India, population issues are always a matter of interest to scholars, politicians, media and the general public. Even at the international level, there is considerable interest in the population growth and policies of India, a country of more than a billion people. One sixth of the world population now lives in India, and any change in India's population pattern will have a significant impact on the world population growth. Given this scenario, population stabilisation has been a priority issue since independence, and India is the first country in the world to implement an official family planning programme as early as 1952. How far have we been able to meet the population challenges during the last five decades? What are the social, economic, and cultural factors which influence the population problem and family planning practice? Why are political parties shying away from taking hard decisions to check the population growth? With all the efforts and programmes, why do the so-called BIMARU states continue to lag behind in fertility transition?

Ragini Sen's *We the billion* provides a detailed discussion on the social and psychological dimensions of population growth, and emphasises the need to examine the issue of high fertility from a cultural perspective. According to Sen, 'fertility is a supra individual issue and cannot be treated on an isolationist basis'. Studies on family planning and fertility behaviour in India, by both Indian and western scholars, have provided valuable insights. Many of them convincingly show the interplay between social, economic and cultural factors together determining the fertility preference of an individual or community. One research issue that has attracted and continues to attract considerable attention of western scholars is our 'fertility behaviour'. In a country known for its heterogeneity and demographic diversity, there exist significant regional disparities in terms of demographic and health indicators. There are

many explanations for this including low literacy, low age at marriage, poor health infrastructure, and above all, low status of women. However, there is unanimity among the demographers all over the world that one factor which predominantly determines the fertility preference is the female literacy. The successful control of fertility in India depends largely on our effort in spreading literacy and awareness about the advantages of the small-family norm, particularly among women.

Given this background and the ongoing debate in India, Sen identifies some broader issues of concern, and stresses the need for a new approach to understand the underlying 'social forces' which influence the fertility behaviour. She gives special attention to the decline in sex ratio, infanticide and sex-selective abortion, female literacy, dowry, the role of media, etc. The problem of our largest populated state Uttar Pradesh, 'The fertile womb of India', receives special treatment in the book. The 2001 Census highlights an alarming drop in the child sex ratio in many states and urban centres. Strong son-preference, an outcome of economic, social and cultural factors, still exists in India, and the availability of modern technology at the doorstep makes it possible for couples to choose the sex of their baby. This has resulted in large-scale elimination of girls, during pregnancy and after birth. The phenomenon of 'missing girls', pointed out by Amartya Sen long back, has taken new dimensions and threatening proportions, if we go by the results of the 2001 Census. The root cause of this malaise lies in the lower status of women, and the widely held notion that the 'daughter as a liability', whereas the son is 'an asset and a source of old age security'. Interestingly, the economically better-off states and urban centres record a drastic drop in the child sex ratio, and for many couples from affluent families, if it is one child, it should be a boy. This phenomenon needs to be explored more systematically.

Sen lays emphasis on the role of media and public opinion. She states that creating awareness among public and removing apprehensions among certain sections of the population are two priority areas. Unfortunately, lack of political will to face the 'fertility issue' squarely is the major hurdle. All political parties conveniently avoid the issue of family planning and take refuge under the hope that 'development is the best contraceptive'. However, as shown in the latest Census, there is hope, as the fertility rates are declining in India, though slowly. Interestingly, the southern states are far ahead of their northern counterparts in fertility transition, and cutting across the socioeconomic divide, the change in attitude and practice can be seen everywhere. In the midst of the ongoing population debate, one cannot forget the fact that there are many success

stories at the district level, though we have not solved the issue at the national level

Combining lucid presentation with facts, figures and messages, Sen's book makes an interesting reading. It is a valuable contribution to the existing debate on addressing the population issue, which is more of a 'human aspect' than a statistical problem. Sen needs to be appreciated for her ability to present a controversial and complicated issue in a simple manner and, at the same time, highlighting the challenges ahead.

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**Ranabir Samaddar (ed.)** *Refugees and the state: Practices of asylum and care in India, 1947-2000*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, 499 pp., Rs 595 (hb) ISBN 0-7619-9729-6

This volume, containing eleven narratives, is the outcome of a discussion between former UNHCR, Sadako Ogata, and former External Affairs Minister of India, Jaswant Singh, in May 2000 in New Delhi. It examines refugee asylum as an integral part of India's culture and civilisation. Towards this endeavour, under the stewardship of Ranabir Samaddar of the Calcutta Research Group, this volume brings together writings by Samaddar, Samir Kumar Das, Ritu Menon, Subir Bhowmik, K. C. Saha, Sabyasachi Basu Roy Choudhury, Rajesh Kharat, V. Suryanarayan, Asha Hans, Srabani Sen and B. S. Chinnai on refugees in India at different historical periods (from pre-colonial through colonial to post-colonial) and in different regions.

This volume is a fair attempt to grapple the complexities of policy study regarding the care of refugees and the role of the state in it. The contributors to the volume draw attention to the fact that the response of the Indian state towards the refugees and their needs has been 'a matter of calculation, discrimination and discretion', making the sphere of care segmented/graded, continuously encountering 'strategic ambiguity' due to concurrent pull-push in diverse directions by ethical, administrative and political authorities with an eye for public politics. They point out that shifting conceptualisation and policy formulation regarding the refugees have made the state response enigmatic, metaphoric and rhetorical. These essays also bring out the fact that, though there has been a transition towards the cause of expanding the sphere of social security, the relation between the state and the governed has been determined by a



regime of charity rather than that of rights. Several essays in this collection show the inherent paradoxes in the relation between care and power, and reemphasise the need for empowerment of the host communities which have to negotiate daily with a situation cropping out of refugee influx

The problem that this volume brings out is the vacillation between political emotion and moral emotion, and their mix by the state. The examination of these chronicles of the varied encounters between the state and the refugees reveals that, as the state still decides who is an insider and who is an outsider, the institutional practices of care and power are determined by the territory and people within.

As this volume deals with cross-cutting themes, accounts, issues and lessons about the varied encounters between the state and the refugees, it may find a wider audience. For the uninitiated, it will be a good source material to pursue research in this area.

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**Ranvinder Singh Sandhu (ed.)** *Urbanization in India: Sociological contributions* (Themes in Indian Sociology - Volume 2) New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, 258 pp., Rs 330 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-9801-2

This volume is the second in the series 'Themes in Indian Sociology' containing selected articles published in the *Sociological bulletin* during the last fifty years. The volume has thirteen papers on the major areas of urbanisation and urbanism in India. These have been organised into four thematic sections.

The first section, 'Urbanisation: Some Perspectives', features various perspectives that help in understanding urbanisation. This section has four papers. Victor S. D'Souza's paper examines urbanisation as a major force of our times, changing and restructuring social reality in its own characteristic way, and throwing up social problems stamped with its own peculiarities. Therefore, urbanisation can be employed as a perspective for social and historical analysis. A. R. Desai says that the urban sector should not be studied as an isolate but as a part of the larger whole. The content of urbanisation and urban mode of life and the problems which emerge from that depend on the major property premises of the social order of which that urban sector is a part. The study of urbanisation from this dimension helps in building an adequate

theory of urbanisation M S A Rao's paper, based on a study of a fringe village on the outskirts of Delhi, seeks to present a case that the 'fringe society' can be treated as a social isolate and used as a tool of analysis to study the process of urbanisation in fringe villages and for the dynamic forces of interaction and rural-urban relations as point of two-way directional movement on the folk-urban continuum D Naram opines that, in the Asian cities, problems do not arise because of the 'urbanism as a way of life' These are the problems of a nation, which are arising from its low productivity and mass poverty

The second section, 'Social Stratification Caste and Class', examines how caste and class behaviour are modified in an urban setting This section has three papers W S K Philips develops a theoretical paradigm to comprehend the emerging pattern of social stratification in urban setting based on his study of Indore He has tried to understand status crystallization in different caste groups Satish Saberwal's paper highlights the relations between the scheduled castes and the high-caste in town in Punjab Edwin D Driver and Aloo E Driver examine the degree to which membership of associations serves to lessen or to solidify the social class in Madras (now Chennai) city

The third section 'Neighbourhood and Family' looks at how the neighbourhood, community and rural joint family adapt to urbanisation This section has three papers Harish Doshi explains how two traditional neighbourhood communities (*pols*) of Ahmedabad have reacted to the demands of industrialisation and its consequences A Bopegamage illustrates the factors that help or mar the growth of good neighbourhoods and promote good neighbourly feelings and relationships among their occupants Sudha Kaldate investigates whether the institution of the family has undergone structural change from the joint family system to the nuclear family in the old Bombay state

The fourth section 'Slum Dwellers/Migrants in Urban Setting' deals with slum-dwellers and analyses the labour characteristics of migrants and their cultural assimilation Mary Chatterjee explores the pattern of migration and degree of stabilisation in Greater Bombay Anand Inbanathan analyses the emerging patterns of social relationships and cultural adaptation of Tamils in the resettlement colony

The volume is a significant addition to the existing literature in urban sociology It has papers by some well-known urban sociologists such as Victor S D'Souza, M S A Rao, A R Desai, A Bopegamage, Satish Saberwal, Harish Doshi and others Although the papers are based on the research done in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the conclusions arrived at are still relevant and help in understanding the change and

continuity of urban society in India. It is surprising to know that only forty-one articles related to urban sociology have appeared in the *Sociological bulletin* since 1952. The editor has included the theoretically more significant contributions related to the major areas of urban sociology in the volume. Some papers help in identifying the priority areas for further research. In some fieldwork-based studies the generalisations are based on a very small sample and their validity is questionable. For example, Inbanathan's paper on the Tamils of Delhi is based on a study of mere twenty-six respondents, and Bopegamage's paper on the neighbourhood relations in Delhi is based on a sample of fifty-eight respondents.

I would like to compliment the Indian Sociological Society for its efforts to publish this series.

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**Rowena Robinson and Sathianathan Clarke (eds.)** *Religious conversion in India: Modes, motivations, and meanings*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, xv + 420 pp., Rs 695 (hb) ISBN 019-566329-2

This sane book on religious conversion in India comes at a time when the debate around conversions has been polarised in a specific political context. The bogey of Islam and Christianity as two proselytising religions gaining adherents to the detriment of a non-proselytising Hindu religion is being raised yet again. This has resulted in panicky efforts to bring 'converted Hindus' back to the fold through *shuddhi* and reconversion ceremonies. These attempts are buttressed by allegations of forcible conversions, arguing that most (lower caste and class) Hindus are lured with money or material aid of other kinds to convert to other religions. As most contributions in this volume reveal, this is rarely the primary reason for conversion.

The phobia of Hindu India being outnumbered by Muslims and Christians has resulted in violent attacks on Christian missionaries in various states. In Tamil Nadu, the chief minister has revived an old ruling against 'forced' conversions, and nationally has been a call for a debate on conversions by the former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

While not taking issue directly with such contentious issues and with the contemporary political construction of the phenomenon of religious

conversion, the book, in a scholarly and reasoned manner, opens out our understanding and analysis of conversion in India. Put together by a sociologist (Rowena Robinson) and a theologian (Sathianathan Clarke), the book dwells on analysing the 'modes, motivations and meanings' of conversion as revealed in historical instances. The authors argue for 'imagining conversion as a fluid process of changing affiliations of religious beliefs and traditions' (p. 8). This, they argue, allows one to compare and contrast in one broad framework 'the shifting sectarian affiliations within Hinduism as well as 'conversion' to Islam or Catholicism' (p. 8). According to them, the phenomenon of conversion requires examination and explanation, and this is offered in terms of the social, political and historical contexts of conversion.

Together, the various articles succeed in showing that conversion is complex, with no single explanation emerging as pre-eminent. Rather, it needs to be historically located in its particular contexts in order to analyse who converts, why, how and when they convert, and the manner in which they convert and its implications for their lives. The volume is significant in its emphasis on examining the agency of those converting.

In the first section on conversion to Islam, the essay by Dominique Sila-Khan reveals in the proselytisation mode of the Nizari Ismailis a slow and non-antagonistic style of conversion that may be far more characteristic of the subcontinent than hitherto acknowledged. In East Bengal, Eaton shows how Islam spread as a function of the expansion of agriculture through land grants to pioneer settlers in a period when the Islamic rulers were indifferent to conversion. Though land grants were made to Hindu institutions as well, most pioneers were Muslims leading to a greater expansion of the Muslim faith. Dale shows a similar expansion of the Muslim community in Kerala through trade accompanied by the diffusion of ideas. Sikand's essay, placed in a more recent historical period, the early twentieth century, details the fascinating story of how Siddiq Hussain, reacting to the Arya movement in the north, began to spread his own version of Islam among Lingayats of Mysore and to the Kannada-speaking areas of the Nizam's dominion. The *ulama* too responded to the Arya *shuddhi* campaign through the *tabligh* (reform) programme that incidentally led to a democratisation of religious authority by making knowledge of Islamic traditions available to all Muslims.

In the second section, contributors deal with conversion in the Jain (Dundas), Sikh (Fenech) and Buddhist (Brekke and Tartakov) traditions. They highlight the fact that conversion in several traditions did not entail exclusivity—and that the progress to more defined identities was slow and often occurred in reaction to larger sociopolitical conditions. Jainism

gathered adherents slowly, being more interested in spreading its core values of non-violence, vegetarianism and compassion in the society at large. Fenech argues that conversion to Sikhism was difficult because Punjabi society in which Sikhism arose was kinship based rather than religion based, and that the Sikh reform movement was focused on retaining members rather than increasing numbers. However, assimilation into the religion definitely occurred giving representation to all castes from the region and those wanting to become Sikhs were brought in through the influence of human *gurus*. Such conversion decreased with the *granth* (the Sikh holy book) taking place of the living *guru*. The two essays on Buddhism deal with different periods. Brekke researches Buddhism through early conversion stories emphasising the personal charisma of the Buddha or one of his disciples. The piece by Tartakov focuses on Ambedkar's own conversion to Buddhism and his creation of the path of *navayana diksha* as a specific variant of Buddhism suited to the needs of his followers, highlighting more social than religious motives for conversion.

The next section brings to the fore the issue of whether the transformation of caste and tribe can be read within the paradigm of conversion. The essays here argue for such a possibility. The first essay (Dube) looks at the effects of two religious movements—the Satnampanthis of Chattisgarh and the Mahima Dharma of Orissa—in incorporating villagers into new practices. The second essay (Dube and Hardiman) examines the role of agency and identity assertion in the movement for Vaishnavite reform among the Bhils.

The fourth and last section brings together essays on conversion to Christianity—Robinson (Goa), Clarke (Tamil Nadu), Webster (Punjab) and Downs (North East). Robinson's essay, while describing the various modes employed by the Portuguese to convert Goans to Christianity (of which special privileges for those who converted and enactment of laws against those who did not, was one), highlights the pragmatic decision of *Hindu gauncars* (landlords) to convert in order not to lose their property. While the new religion afforded the space for lower castes to delink status and occupation, it also allowed upper castes to retain their privileges. Clarke's and Webster's papers focus on Christianity providing an emancipatory identity to dalits in Tamil Nadu and Punjab. Both, however, raise important points about whether conversion to Christianity has freed dalits from their low caste status and the need to evaluate conversion effects over the long term. The paper by Downs on conversion in the North East reveals that, contrary to received wisdom, adoption of

Christianity was a response to the need for stability in the tribal system seen as facing a threat from a Hindu nation state

A missing element in the book is the gender dimension of conversion. What are women's roles in the process? Are men more often the agents of conversion? Do women simply follow men in converting or do they also exercise choice? Given that within the household women are responsible, through socialisation, of transmitting the practised religion, what are their responses to conversion initiated by men? Moreover, does it bring about change in their status spelling either greater restriction or freedom? It is crucial to explore the gendered nature of the conversion phenomenon

The most important lesson of the book is that, trapping conversion in a single 'moment' of what is essentially a process, limits our understanding of it. This insight itself should be of value to scholars as well as to those in civil society urging a more informed view

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**Sharmila Rege (ed.).** *Sociology of gender: The challenge of feminist sociological knowledge* (Themes in Indian Sociology - Volume 1) New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, xviii + 447 pp, Rs 390 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-9705-9

The title of the book suggests that it is a contribution to sociological knowledge, but it ends up as a collection of feminist writings in sociology and anthropology. After reading the introduction, one understands the absence of women in the pre-institutionalisation phase of sociology—'malestream' instead of 'mainstream', as Sharmila Rege rightly remarks in her introduction to the volume. Rege identifies the challenge of feminist sociological knowledge at three levels: the discipline of sociology, the male sociologists, and the feminist theories. She notes inclusion, separatism and reconceptualisation as the three stages of response to this challenge. She also highlights the crisscross borderlines of 'gender' and 'women' as concepts in feminist theorisation.

The book is divided into two parts. Part I is devoted to an analysis of the conceptual issues in feminism. The feminist theorisation seems to have suffered a phase of self-criticism, as is clear from Beatrice's presentation of the different theories of feminism: feminist liberalism,

feminist socialism, feminist essentialism, and feminist postmodernism. She argues that each theory has some merits and demerits, but the most promising theory, according to her, is feminist socialism, as it has the capacity of countering the essentialists' universalising attempts. It also rejects feminist liberalism for considering women as a class in the natural substrata of economic and social structure. In her conclusions, Beatrice stresses on the need for a new feminist theoretical framework of analysis.

Patricia Uberoi identifies the problem of patriarchy as the focus of anthropological explanations. She suggests that patriarchy may be taken as a starting point, but it may not be the basis for the distinction and differentiation of the sexes because of the great variety of kinship practices and descent rules in India. As for both alliance theory and descent theory, they seem appropriate for anthropological explanations, but she holds that one should go beyond marriage and kinship relations to study culture and emerging trends in political economy of the present day to understand the problem in the right perspective.

Part Two is subdivided into four sections, each section containing a few selected articles published during 1976-2001 in the *Sociological bulletin*, the official journal of the Indian Sociological Society. One does not discern here a right linkage between the theory of feminism and the gender articulation of feminist knowledge. Obviously, thematic continuity suffers because of the wide range of issues relating to the study of gender within the discipline of sociology.

Leela Dube narrates her observations of a matrilineal Muslim society of the Island of Kalpeni, whose women enjoy an independent and much higher status as compared with women of the patrilineal Muslim communities of north India. She also highlights how the people of Kalpeni were not much attracted to the changes that took place after the Lakshadweep Islands were made into a Union Territory in 1959, which marked a significant departure from the past.

Raj Mohini Sethi seeks to analyse the work patterns of women in relation to their participation in decision making at different levels, and assesses their labour time spent in agriculture, animal husbandry and other household activities. She notes that despite spending more time as compared to men in agriculture, women's participation in decision making remains low except in Sirmour (one of the four villages she studied). The reason for such a neglect and low position, according to Sethi, is seclusion and isolation of women. The seclusion and isolation of women due to *purdah*, child marriage, *sati* and forced widowhood

have degraded women. Their seclusion keeps women out of the decision-making process related to various rural development activities, too.

Karuna Chanana explains how socialisation of stereotyped roles of girls and women have continued to impress upon girls in the formal process of education at school, whether it is the syllabus, games, facilities, new courses, globalisation and market, or options and strategies for job avenues. The social image of girls goes along with them wherever they go. This is so because the female sexuality is protected and controlled by the values and norms of family, caste, the village community. Thus, the denial of women's agency can be seen in the educational context, too.

Finally, Maitrayee Chaudhuri has highlighted the gender factor in the making of the Indian nation-state. She focuses on how and in what manner women or gender issues have been projected and taken care of. She argues that the state has perceived women primarily at three levels as agents and recipients of development, as citizens, and as cultural emblems.

Rege's anthology is a landmark publication in sociology for two reasons. First, it is the first volume of the series 'Themes in Indian Sociology' sponsored by the Indian Sociological Society to mark its Golden Jubilee in 2001, and second, this book is an account of the journey of feminist sociological knowledge. All those interested in gender issues, women's movements and feminist theories will find this book valuable and thought provoking.

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**T.S. Saraswathi (ed.)** *Cross-cultural perspectives in human development: Theory, research and applications*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, 401 pp, Rs 395 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-9769-5

This book addresses the issues in the study of human development across different cultures. It is an exercise in establishing the discipline of cross-cultural psychology as a holistic attempt to understand the cultural variations and similarities shown by people in different eco-cultural settings.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part deals with theoretical perspectives in the discipline. The second part illustrates research and applications in daily-life situations across several countries. The



opening articles in both the sections, namely, Berry's article on human psychological development and Nsamenang's essay on arriving at a balanced approach to education, using established traditions, are rightfully placed. They give the reader a context for understanding the remaining papers in their respective sections.

Sinha and Tripathi's article, in the first part of the book, makes interesting reading with the ideas of individualism and collectivism brought out as an integral part of the Indian psyche. Rampal's article exposes the discontinuities between culturally inbuilt learning strategies and the formal education system.

Its plea for a holistic theory of human development should invite the attention of social scientists to this book.

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Vivek Kumar *Dalit leadership in India* Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2002, 290 pp., Rs 850 (hb) ISBN 81-7835-087-4

Contemporary Indian democracy is characterised by fierce competitive politics. The era of one-party dominance has made way for coalition politics. While the gradual decline of the Congress and the growing strength of the BJP is one aspect of this politics, the other side is the emergence of regional parties and the political rise of the backward castes. Despite their inter- and intra-caste divisions, they have found strong political representations and articulation of group interest through parties like the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Samajwadi Party (SP), Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), etc.

Against this backdrop, Vivek Kumar's book on dalit leadership would be a significant addition to the existing literature on dalit movement. Literally, 'dalit' means the exploited, but the political scenario has changed much and today the process of mobilisation and empowerment of the so-called 'untouchables' or the scheduled castes is on.

Dalit leadership is an integral part of this empowerment game, and Kumar traces the origin, growth and dynamics of this leadership. The advent of dalit leadership is often identified with Ambedkar. However, Kumar asserts that the initial phase of dalit leadership existed even before Ambedkar in the form of the Adi-movements, the Mahar movement, etc. According to Kumar, the second phase of dalit leadership

includes leaders such as Ambedkar and a few of his contemporaries. Ambedkar's leadership is further divided into three interrelated phases due to the changing dynamics of his strategies. In the first phase, Ambedkar wanted to bring social reforms both within the Hindu social order and among the dalits. In the second phase, Ambedkar resorted to the political weapon to get over the exploitation of dalits and, in this phase, he was fully recognised as their undisputed political leader. In the third and final phase of his leadership, Ambedkar acted as a religious reformer. He embraced Buddhism, and gave a new religious identity to lakhs of his dalit followers. His ultimate aim was to free the dalits from the stigma that they carried as part of the Hindu social order.

After Ambedkar, there has not been any leader of his stature, though many leaders have been leading the dalit movement either independently or through political parties. This post-independence leadership, in terms of electoral politics, is called the third phase of dalit leadership by Kumar. Kumar studies dalit leadership in three specific regions of Uttar Pradesh. According to him, dalit leadership in the state can be divided into two broad categories: socioreligious and political. While the socio-religious leadership stressed on the 'do's' and 'don'ts' for the dalit community, it has been gradually replaced by political leadership. Political leadership harps on secular issues like right to vote, separate electorates, reservation in government services, etc. Kumar further divides political leadership into dependent and independent. The first refers to dalit leadership in different political parties dominated by the upper castes and the classes, and the second refers to their own political parties formed at different points of time for keeping the dalit agenda at the centre stage. Dalit leadership over the years has changed its nature from persuasive to assertive and confrontationist. The impact of dalit political leadership on the dalit community, argues Kumar, has been both positive and negative. On the positive side, they are now categorised as a separate political group with their own identity and interest, and their bargaining power has also increased. However, on the negative side, there are factionalism and divide in dalit political leadership. There is lack of a unified pan-Indian dalit consciousness, and the dalit leaders also fail to find permanent allies in the social and political arenas. Moreover, dalit leadership is yet to emerge as strong enough to sideline the general leadership within the dominant national parties.

Kumar ends with an optimistic vision. According to him, more educated dalit youths are becoming conscious about their empowerment, and, with increased mobilisation, it is likely that some day they will get

the opportunity to occupy the highest level of office for a reasonable period. Structural changes towards the empowerment of dalits and integrating them with the Indian society will then begin. Whether the dalit community's rise to office and power would integrate them with the larger society or isolate them into yet another insulated group with demands for separatism is yet to be seen. Nevertheless, this process will have a significant impact on the federal structure of the Indian polity.

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**V. Sujatha:** *Health by the people: Sociology of medical lore*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2003, 184 pp., Rs 400 (hb). ISBN 81-7033-794-1

The present study is an attempt to identify the prevailing conceptualisations and practices of medical lore in selected villages in Tamil Nadu. The distinct areas of analysis are categorised into eight logically arranged chapters. The first chapter gives a vivid analysis of the concept of 'medical lore' by situating it within the existing theoretical explanations. The author has shown how medical knowledge as a thought-process is shaped by the conditions of environment leading to the practice of medical belief. The essence of this derivation emanates from the theoretical bases propounded by Karl Mannheim, Michel Foucault, Alfred Schultz and others.

The second chapter presents the methodological framework adopted to approach the issue of medical lore in the area of the study. Obviously, the present sociological enquiry into the issue of medical lore is qualitative in nature, as most of the analytical aspects fall within the scope of medical anthropology. However, the description of the methodology seems casual as for the sampling frame. In the third chapter the villagers' conceptions of disease and the treatment process are discussed extensively. The analysis of the treatment process for common ailments has inevitably incorporated the knowledge base of the local medical practitioners to add veracity to the explanations of the village folk.

The typical food culture that is closely associated with the environmental factors, such as the nature of agricultural production and the occupational pattern (particularly of the Valayar community), substantiates the symbiotic relation between the food culture and nature. This goes to prove that culture is very much shaped by the environment in which the human beings inhabit. The explanation of the 'variety prin-

ciple' as conditioned by the availability of the food is quite admirable. The 'variety principle' also confirms the notion that the food culture of a specific location is conditioned by the availability of and access to food. The chapter on food addresses the theoretical validation in terms of culture and environment and, while identifying certain gaps in the local conceptions of food, this study provides ample scope for further exploration.

The chapter on health and hygiene presents the status of the health-supporting infrastructure available in the area of the study along with the health practices of the people. The invasion of the western medical system and the peoples' preference for it for containing serious diseases imply the disjunction of therapeutic behaviour of the people now. This highlights the change in the health-seeking behaviour of the people, particularly of those living in remote villages, due to the intervention of the modern communication systems.

Development of science and technology has brought about several changes in the production process, especially in the agricultural sector. There is growing awareness of the deleterious effect of technology, particularly the extensive application of chemical fertilisers and the indiscriminate use of poisonous chemical pesticides, on the health of human beings. This is brought out clearly in the chapter on 'Internal to External Transformation of the Ecology and Body System'. This chapter goes to prove that the villagers, through observation and experience, have accumulated sizeable knowledge on health and well-being. The people are becoming sensitive to alterations in the ecology because of their close association with the immediate life-supporting environment.

The theoretical refinement of the entire work on 'medical lore' is elaborated in the last two chapters. The last chapter, titled 'Vital Links', typifies a systematic presentation and it attracts the attention of readers and calls for further exploration. On the whole, this book is a seminal document and an addition to the existing stock of knowledge in the field of social and medical anthropology. The extensive bibliography shows the thorough exploration of the author into the already existing stock of knowledge. The book is neatly designed. The glossary and appendices are helpful in understanding not only the terminologies used but also the realities explained in the text.

Though this book displays erudition, some improvement could have been carried out before going to the press. In Tamil Nadu, now, no district is named after any great personality and, hence, referring to the former names of the districts could have been avoided. In certain areas

the views of the village folk seem conjectural rather than real and scientific. Besides, equating *naadi* with the pulse rate of the western medical technology lacks a clear point of convergence because of the distinct nature (user complexity) of the traditional *naadi pariksha*. The semantic construction of the text seems casual, and a little attention into the style could have made this work more enlightening.

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**Y. Ravindranath Rao** *Tribal tradition and change: A study of Kudubis of south India*. Mangalore: Mangala Publications, 2003, viii + 263 pp., Rs 380 (hb). ISBN 81-88685-00-3

The book under review is an outcome of the study carried out by Y. Ravindranath Rao on the Kudubis of Goa living in the region of Karnataka. Kudubis are a tribal community, but they have not been listed as a Scheduled Tribe. The study focuses on various aspects of the Kudubis' life—the food habits, taboos, language, economy, political organisation, and kinship and marriage. It also explains the changes that have taken place in these spheres and the factors responsible for these changes. Rao concentrates on the changes that have occurred in the life of tribals due to three major processes, namely, Hinduisation, Sanskritisation and Modernisation. He attempts to evaluate whether the Kudubis are following these processes in their sociocultural and behavioural patterns.

Rao has meticulously gathered qualitative data through first-hand experience of the formal and informal aspects of the Kudubis' life. He has collected primary data through tools like the interview schedule, participant observation and focused group discussions. The book is divided into eight chapters, including the introduction and conclusion, besides the appendices, glossary and bibliography.

Analysing the economic conditions of the tribe, Rao points out that though their financial conditions have met with little change, significant occupational changes could be seen. People have now started shifting to other trades leaving their traditional professions as an impact of the process of modernisation. They avoid opting for the low and unclean jobs due to the notion of pollution and purity, thereby endorsing Srinivas' model of sanskritisation.

Rao finds a domineering effect of Hindu religious practices on the Kudubis. They worship their own local deity, namely, Lord Mallikar-

juna, and Goddess Durga, whom they call the Goan deity. However, they have also started worshipping the Hindu gods like Rama, Krishna, Ishwara, Parvathi, etc. They have been found subscribing to the great tradition of Hindus as in celebrating the Holi festival by worshipping their own goddess of Goa—Amma instead of Lord Krishna. They celebrate it by singing and dancing throughout the night, instead of playing with colours.

Rao notices changes in their death rituals. In the past, they used to bury the dead body, but they now cremate it. As for marriage, bride price is still an integral part of the ceremony, though they are inclining towards the dowry system. The widow remarriage was earlier prevalent, but the tribesmen do not encourage it now.

Kudubis are divided into social organisations called as *vodows*, and the headman of a *vodow* is known as *gurikara*. The function of a *vodow* is not to formulate laws and regulations, but to see that their religious rites, customs, traditions, festivals and rituals are followed. Due to the presence of modern democratic institutions, the *vodows* are less significant now.

The book provides interesting details of the Kudubis' life. It could have been more insightful if Rao had added some case studies and narratives from the field. The innumerable typographical errors mar the quality of the work.

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**Yogesh Atal** *The poverty question: Search for solutions*. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2002, 184 pp., Rs 400 (hb). ISBN 81-7033-718-6

As a follow-up of the WSSD (Copenhagen, 1995), Yogesh Atal edited three volumes: *Poverty and participation in civil society* (1997a), *Perspectives on educating the poor* (1997b), and *Poverty in transition and transition in poverty* (1999). Each volume carried an exhaustive summary, along with the editor's comments, as 'Introduction'. The present volume is, primarily, a collection of those introductions. In addition, a fresh introduction and two of his earlier research papers on poverty also figure. The main justification being, 'The reader will get at one place my contributions to the poverty debate' (p. 9). On going through those contributions, an informed reader may not gain much. The

'search for solutions' is futile if the problem itself remains unspecified or left open ended

In his 1971 paper, our development strategy comes in for a critique 'In the absence of a cogently formulated theoretical model and without the basis of a proper and adequate benchmark data, their prescriptions were no more than sophisticated versions of an ideological decision They enunciated the slogan of modernising the society by making it developed and socialistic' (p 122) However, soon after follows the rationale of the same strategy 'I tend to agree with the view that in the underdeveloped countries, the ideology of socialism is just another name for the ideology of development' (p 125) Besides this ambivalence, one finds the following curious statement. 'The fact of the matter is that national income is never distributed equally. And, that is the main source of inequality within the country' (pp 126-27) Obviously, there is a slip somewhere

In his 1972 paper, however, there is a consistent line of thought The author hits out at the erroneous approach of equating inequalities in the economic sphere with social inequalities He asserts, 'It is wrong to equate poverty with ascriptive status there are poor families among the castes which are traditionally assigned a high status, similarly, there are top-achievers among the so-called scheduled castes and scheduled tribes' (p 144) This goes well with his observation that 'Education, industrialisation and urban impact have made mobility possible and the number of parvenus is getting larger and larger' (p 134)

In the rest, one would come across useful references, valuable comments, and flashes of rare sensitivity For instance, on page 37, come the observation and the posers

No doubt, the silence of the poor also speaks, but one doubts if it is heard And if it is heard, whether it is heeded There are also the middlemen who speak on behalf of the poor, and speak quite forcefully It still remains to be found out what is the ultimate consequence of all that serious and well-intended effort Poverty has not gone, and the ranks of the poor are constantly inflating The poor will have to learn to break their silence, to give up their dependence on the middlemen, and to assert that they belong to the centre and not to the margins In other words, a true civil society will come only when the large constituency of the poor is empowered Why is it not happening? What are the obstacles? What are the implementable strategies for their inclusion, or their assertion for inclusion? These are the questions that we must ask and we must find answers

In spite of an assertion to the contrary, some policy tips are there

- (i) Poverty, or economic backwardness, is usually an attribute of the family. Therefore, anti-poverty interventions must be targeted at that level (p 103)
- (ii) As such, poverty eradication calls for a holistic approach, in place of the sectoral. A clinical approach, treating the visible symptoms, does not take us to the root of the problem (p 99)
- (iii) while all share the rhetoric of eradicating poverty, there exist vested interests both among the poor and the non-poor in perpetuating poverty (p 31)
- (iv) Real poverty may not be apparent, and apparent poverty may not be real (p 45)

Chapter 2 deals with the poverty scenario in six countries of the former socialist block. Many indices and poverty groupings figure in this chapter. If you decide to use 'Poverty-gap Ratio' (p 58) as an index, do refer to Sen (1981), as cited (p 40). While deploying the 'Engel Coefficient' (p 58), read 'proportion' in place of 'amount' (line 5, para 3). Also, on page 15, a minor correction/addition is required concerning the UNDP's Human Poverty Index. It is true that HDR-1997 restricted the use of the HPI to the non-industrialised countries. However, it carried the Human Poverty Profile for all the 175 countries it covered. Moreover, in the very next issue, HDR-1998, a second Human Poverty Index—HPI-2—was computed exclusively for Industrial Countries. Therefore, we now have human poverty measure(s) for both the sets. For those of you who are confident about the freedom-enhancing impact of education, a reading of Chapter 3 would suggest re-examination of the relationship between poverty and education.

Some minor lapses and apparent ambivalence of Atal notwithstanding, this volume is a useful addition to the literature on poverty in varied policy regimes. The volume is likely to arouse your curiosity about the three main works cited therein.

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# SOCIOLOGICAL BULLETIN

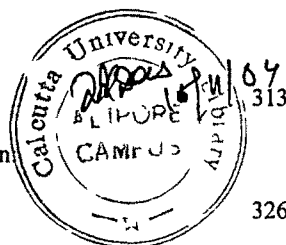
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## Contemporary Professional Sociology in America: A Critique

*Raj P. Mohan and Graham C. Kinloch*

*This paper is concerned with understanding the contemporary American professional sociology's relative lack of response to pressing world events, particularly the disturbing levels of conflict and continuing social problems. This is partly accounted for by the profession's typical scientific and normative projection in attempts to achieve conceptual or social order. This underlying tension has been aggravated by the discipline's boundless search for scientific recognition, assumed social rationality, and general application of positivistic research methods. Such deficiencies have been reinforced by the larger culture's bureaucratised, rationalised environment, commodifying books and critical thought, reducing self-consciousness and practical concerns. Recommended alternatives include the use of sociological portraits, 'phronetic' social science, adoption of more complex, committed perspectives, professional inclusion of minority sociology to diversify the discipline significantly, and application of valuable non-American viewpoints, particularly those developed by social scientists in India.*

The contemporary world continues to experience extremely disturbing levels of conflict and major social problems. War, genocide, destruction, violence, poverty, homelessness and widespread disease are but a few that dominate global headlines. These pressing issues have become aggravated by the worldwide impact of 'September 11th' and the consequent war against terrorism, involving a major obsession with threatening developments in the Middle East, suicide attacks and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a corollary decline in sensitivity to local issues and concerns, and dilution of constitutional protections and civil rights in the United States generally.

How does professional sociology in the United States typically respond to such developments? A cursory examination of the recent issues of the *American journal of sociology* (Vol 107, No 6, May 2002), *American sociological review* (Vol 67, No 5, October 2002) and *Social forces* (Vol 81, No 2, December 2002) highlights academic concern with a wide range of social issues, including religion, social

class, research methods, the labour market, public policy, foreign investment, international trade, job training, black crime, sentencing, suicide rates, child-rearing, and marital happiness, along with dynamic topics such as social movements, protests, and militancy. While such concerns deserve attention, they do not approach the magnitude of more recent events, and more often focus on conceptual and methodological rather than societal implications. This is *not* to suggest that American professional sociology ignores its social context, it addresses it *indirectly* rather than head on.

Considering the above, it is not surprising that contemporary sociology in this society appears to lack direct relevance to pressing and continuing social problems. Why is this so? Professionalisation may be, at least, partially to blame given its elite control of candidate admission, training, certification, and publication, relative separation or distance from the larger society, and ongoing competition for prestige relative to other social sciences, its elitist, largely establishment-oriented, technological and vacuous approach to major social issues is hardly surprising. On the other hand, such a process is part of any academic discipline's historical development and contains no such endemic limitations, however, for the social sciences, the argument could be made that its impact has been severely limiting on the nature of these fields, given their inherent links to the societal context both substantively and occupationally. Sociologists both reflect and study society in an interactive fashion. Consequently, complete objectification is impossible in such a reflective process.

Responding to such restrictions, this paper is concerned with understanding American sociology's professional development and major trends, its contemporary limitations, the manner in which the broader contemporary cultural context reinforces these, and a variety of alternatives which might contribute to the discipline's greater sensitivity to its societal context.

### **American Sociology's Professional Development**

American sociology's history may typically be viewed in terms of its professional growth (for example, graduates, departments, programs, journals, etc.), theoretical and methodological developments, and responses to a changing societal context (Kinloch 1985b: 348). More revealing, perhaps, is the profession's underlying tension between scientific recognition and social reformism, typified in its ongoing ambivalence concerning growing academic prestige, on the one hand, and

potential relevance to public policy on the other, reflected in the contrast between 'objective' research and political activism (cf Friedrichs 1970, Kinloch 1985a) These twin themes get entangled as 'scientific reformism' under particular circumstances, involving the use of research to impose social stability during periods of stress through the sociologists' own values—a kind of 'normative projection' (Kinloch 1981) On the other hand, the discipline's history reveals significant movement away from its religious background and concern with immediate social problems towards an increasing obsession with its major research methods and professional status throughout most of the later twentieth century into the present (Kinloch 1988) A wide range of data, including American Sociological Association presidential addresses, journal debates, major journal topics, and introductory textbooks suggest that, during these decades when American society appears to be progressing, sociologists tend to reify broad processes of societal development, when major problems arise, on the other hand, sociology is more involved as the science of normative stability In either case, some kind of conceptual order is attained, either through the scientific analysis of social change or moral harmony and consensus (Kinloch 1987) Both reactions involve some kind of *projection* or *imposed order*, either through scientific or normative formulation The former applies theoretical, conceptual, or empirical notions to the issue at hand, while the latter develops desired normative or ideological solutions relating to it Whatever the case, both are reinforced, protected and maximised by the kinds of elite control inherent in ongoing professionalisation

Bringing the above elements together, much of the American professional sociology embodies five main elements

- 1 the sociologists' norms and values, or ideology,
- 2 their application of scientific theoretical generalisations and research methods to the problem at hand,
- 3 the reinforcing effects of professional control and elite prestige, resulting in
- 4 normative or scientific projection, creating
- 5 imposed conceptual and/or social order in the face of societal development or major social problems

In this manner, empirical or social order is achieved through the scientific application of professional sociologists' values to the dynamic societal context in which they operate Scientific projection of either type 'makes sense' out of a troubling world Such a process reveals obvious limitations, considering its restricted foundation, approach, and

reinforcing context We turn to delineate some of these next in our discussion

### Contemporary American Sociology's Major Limitations

American sociology has been critiqued for its endless search for professional prestige, struggle to become scientific, preoccupation with social rationality thereby ignoring the irrational, and largely exclusive use of positivism as its research methodology (Mohan and Kinloch 2000) The first of these has tended to result in fashionable research with little policy relevance, popular and transient research topics, limited attention to a broad range of academic journals, egocentric concern with career rewards at any cost, lack of theoretical development in the face of empirical concerns, statistical dominance, and a general lack of interest in philosophical and ethical issues (*Ibid* 104) This overwhelming desire for professional respect at almost any cost may ironically have become a major factor contributing to the ridicule often heaped on sociology for its simplistic, mundane, obvious view of the world, dressed up in scientific clothing

Trying to imitate the physical sciences has also resulted in the dominance of mathematical and statistical concerns, measurement obsessions to the exclusion of other significant issues, absence of clear conceptual definitions, assumed external causes, overlooking interactive relationships among factors, and a lack of vision concerning where we are going and what we want to achieve Assuming the social world approaches a 'normal curve', focusing on the logical to the exclusion of the non-logical and irrational, and overlooking the 'unexplained variance' in our research results further limit our insight into the complexity of modern society and its pressing social issues (*Ibid* 105-07)

The discipline's major commitment to simplistic positivism has curtailed its social insight significantly, largely ignoring society's historical dimension, overlooking the complexity of human reality in the imposition of natural science methods and concepts, pushing aside the applicability of self-consciousness to understanding actual behaviour, and taking a simplistic organisational approach to understanding its development as a social science (*Ibid* 107-10) While more qualitative, non-positivistic methodologies exist, they fail to approach the levels of professional prestige and funding that traditional techniques receive Consequently, much of American sociology's potential insight into contemporary society remains largely stunted, simplistic, and lacking in perceived relevance to major contemporary issues



However, it is vital *not* to overlook the views of those few who argue for a more enlightened approach. Robert N. Bellah, for example, is well-known for his desire to re-establish social science as 'public philosophy', concerned with public dialogue, moral values, 'active interviews' and a major attempt to participate in the 'common dialogue' (see Bellah *et al* 1985). Furthermore, William J. Wilson's classic *The truly disadvantaged* (1987) represents a major effort to move beyond dealing with public issues purely in terms of racial discrimination to the broader context of the 'American economy' as vital to effective social reform. Nevertheless, those who attempt to return social science to ethical and moral issues are chastised for not actively trying to change the power structure of American society (cf. Feagin and Vera 2001).

In general, then, traditional American sociology's more glaring limitations reflect its constant search for prestige, endless desire for recognition as a true 'science', assumed rationality of human social behaviour, and overwhelming application of positivistic methods to its major research topics. In many respects, these trends exhibit the discipline's historical foundation as positive philosophy and development in an academic context valuing the scientific method, above all others, as the assumed path to 'knowledge'. Consequently, the field has remained largely underdeveloped as a truly 'social' science, instead reducing the complexity of human reality to simplistic empirical objects, manipulated statistically to evaluate their 'significance' to the development of knowledge in the field generally. While significant exceptions exist in this regard, these historical trends have largely been and continue to be reinforced by the society's larger cultural context—a topic we turn to next.

### American Sociology's Cultural Context

The notion that modern society has become predominantly bureaucratized and rationalized is obviously far from being new, going back at least to Max Weber, if not farther. The standardization of social structure generally is notable, reflected in its specialized, impersonal, and hierarchical nature. Consequently, society as a whole has become 'McDonaldized', focusing on 'efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control', reflected in high levels of general convenience, availability of goods and services, comfortable and controlled environments, uniform experiences, and speedy technological developments (Ritzer 2000: 12, 15-16). However, these kinds of developments do not guarantee reasonable consequences, are often 'dehumanizing', and are not

completely uniform throughout society (*Ibid* 16-19) In such an environment, individualism and critical insight are often lost in the wake of an increasingly homogenised, centralised, de-intellectualised, passive, conformity-ridden, materialistic culture

B. Agger, in his work *Fast capitalism*, has written eloquently about the 'decline of books' in which 'The world swallows traditional texts and disperses them into money, science, edifice, and figure' (1989 1) Readers become impelled to 'accept, adjust, acquiesce' while opposition groups such as Marxism and feminism have become 'slogans' substituting for 'thought' (*Ibid*) Words are robbed of their meaning, the societal environment emphasises conformity, notions of significance have become lost, contradictory ideas have become 'discipline, professionalised, tame', 'artificial communities' are constructed around 'common cultural texts of money, science, edifice, and figure', and the notion of 'reason' has become 'technical efficiency, popularity, productivity' (*Ibid* 139, 143 and 146) In all of this, the 'membrane between text and world is increasingly fragile' (*Ibid* 1) Relevant reaction to such a state of affairs involves autonomous, change-oriented, significant, distanced, critical, non-disciplinary thought

B. Flyvbjerg (2001) has also commented on contemporary society's 'Rationalist Turn', involving the 'narrowing of (the) notion of rationality to a predominantly instrumental one', reflecting the 'risk society' (2001 53) Consequently, possible alternatives are 'beyond our current vision' (*Ibid* 54), while contemporary thinkers lack self-consciousness and ignore major issues such as ethics, values, and change-oriented research He concludes that we need to make social science 'matter' by turning away from natural science methods, focusing on issues relevant to communities at every level of society, and communicating our results to the broader community to ensure that our science is viewed as relevant to the human future

Professional sociology's obsessions with scientific prestige, rationality, positivism, and statistical data both reflect and continue to be reinforced by this McDonaldised environment with its emphasis on control, predictability, technological efficiency, conformity, and instrumental rationality, ignoring its possible relevance to the larger community, its welfare, and potential future development Little wonder that many outsiders view the profession as simplistic, mundane, vacuous, and largely irrelevant to issues occurring in the 'real world' Of obvious relevance to our discussion at this point is what alternatives exist which might alleviate at least some of these serious drawbacks—the topic that we turn to address next

### **Alternatives**

What kinds of alternatives are available which might at least offer more adequate insight into the complexity of human social reality? Greater methodological and ideological diversity may offer potential professional changes to overcome sociology's traditional narrowness in these regards

Sociological portraits, as a qualitative kind of methodology, typified in the work of many early and somewhat more recent sociologists such as W. I. Thomas, Florian Znaniecki, and C. Wright Mills, along with past small-group studies, offer the advantages of a more microscopic, but social, view of the world. They include both individual experience and social objects, subjective and objective aspects of reality, and combine the synchronic and diachronic, the concrete and abstract, fixed and more fluid, as well as both form and content. They may also be developed at any point in time, thereby potentially contributing to more cumulative types of sociological knowledge. They also offer rich pictures of particular social situations, use a wide variety of data types, incorporate historical dynamics and change, tend to be more inductive than imposed, and significantly incorporate rather than overlook human self-consciousness (Mohan and Kinloch 2000: 110-13). Many sociological works labelled as 'classics' involve these kinds of detailed portraits, enduring in the discipline as definitive time-points and the basis of major theoretical models for decades to follow. They are also reflected in the major works of both early and later founding sociologists. Furthermore, they represent 'types' and 'typologies' which are often key ingredients involved in the theorising process. Far from being on the margin of the development of sociological knowledge, they are part of its central, ongoing development. They also represent the opposite of simplistic, statistical reductionism so typical of much contemporary research. Taking a richer, more microscopic, detailed, individualistic yet social view of what is going on in society may go far in overcoming some of the conceptual, methodological, and motivational limitations typical of professional sociology.

Flyvbjerg advocates the use of 'phronesis'—the use of 'practical knowledge and practical ethics', an approach that is 'pragmatic, variable, context-dependent. Oriented toward action. Based on practical value-rationality' (2001: 56-57). Its 'methodological guidelines' involve a major focus on values, particularly concerning 'where we are going', focusing on power as central, including in a positive sense, getting involved in the contexts we are trying to understand, highlighting 'small'

questions and details, examining 'practice' ahead of 'discourse' in the sense of everyday, practical activities, using 'concrete cases' examined in their context, asking 'how' as well as 'why', integrating individual and social levels of analysis, and using 'polyphony' of 'voices' rather than an imposed, privileged position (*Ibid.* 129-40). Central to this 'phronetic social science' are providing major examples and 'narratives' of 'how power works', its consequences and possible changes (*Ibid.* 140). In this manner, *phronesis* is contrasted with *episteme* (scientific knowledge) and *techne* (production-oriented) (*Ibid.* 57). Such a practical, value-conscious, power-oriented, detailed, practical, integrative, pluralistic approach to social reality, while clearly limited by societal contexts, would clearly go far in potentially overcoming at least some of the typical limitations of the more simplistic, abstract, elitist approaches of professional sociology.

The need for a far greater diversity of 'voices' in the profession brings us to the importance of *minority* sociology. Much of the traditional sociology has been dominated by an establishment view of society, its major social problems, and the overwhelming desire for scientific prestige. Consequently, American society has largely been 'understood' from the 'top down', from a largely conformist, abstract, simplistic, and an empirical point of view (Mohan and Kinloch 2000: 113-14). Adding views from the 'bottom up' are clearly vital to a more thorough understanding of central issues such as economic exploitation, racial domination, ethnic discrimination, and patriarchal control. This requires that sociology expand its boundaries, perspectives, research methods, publication outlets, and organisation to reflect a true diversity of views adequately, thereby offering insight into the complex, ubiquitous nature of modern inequality. This is *not* to argue that minority sociology should become professionalised, rather, that professional sociology should become diverse in *every* respect.

Many minority sociologists have used their research to show problems such as gender domination and subordination (Lengermann 2001), the need to discredit majority stereotypes regarding black culture (Taylor 1999), racial conflict in white sociology departments (Higginbotham 1977), and the relevance of critical theory to the adequate development of 'Chicano Sociology' (Lowy and Baker 1988). Such discussions highlight the inadequacy and stereotypical blindness of majority, professional sociology.

Few analyses, perhaps, are as eloquent as that offered by Staples who, in his book *Introduction to black sociology* (1976), compares white and black sociology as for their major aims, concepts, perspectives,

research topics, data interpretation, views, contexts, and methods. White academics typically stereotype black culture in negative terms, emphasise the need for racial integration as a solution to the 'race problem', view race as predominantly physically-defined, define social class on a group basis, and interpret the effects of education and technology as largely positive in impact. Black sociologists, in contrast, define their own culture more positively, emphasise black self-determination rather than racial integration, view race more in terms of subordinate political status, define class as involving inequality in the case of all blacks, and interpret the potential impact of education and technology as possibly increasing black unemployment and economic inequality. According to this analysis, clear racial differences in interpreting American society sociologically are evident.

In contrast to professional white sociology, furthermore, the goals of black sociology include studying their own culture using the perspective of cultural relativism, re-evaluating white theory and research regarding blacks, researching white racism in depth, taking a more historical and pan-Africanist, comparative approach to understanding the 'black condition', rejecting the notion of value neutrality in contrast to black values, and using statistical research and data to portray the black situation in contrast to previous white stereotyping accurately. According to his approach, black sociology is distinctive in its community-development goals, critical views of whites, and uniquely theoretical, methodological, and statistical approaches to understanding its own culture and position in American society.

According to this important case study, minority academics have a great deal to contribute to mainstream sociology regarding its professional goals, theoretical and conceptual perspectives, use of research methods, cultural knowledge of the larger society, and interpretation of its major institutions. Much of the American professional sociology has been stereotypical, simplistic, inaccurate, and unduly optimistic regarding the status quo and future developments. Largely limiting societal knowledge to the perspectives developed and elaborated by white, middle-class, often WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), establishment-oriented, prestige-driven males does little to portray the rich, complex, variety of modern society, its problems and potential solutions adequately. Ironically, such a condition is clearly *unscientific* in its limited, distorted empirical basis.

It is important to emphasise, however, that minority sociology, by frequently defining itself largely as the opposite of majority social science, runs the risk of involving another, if different, type of ethno-

centrism. Moving outside the boundaries of American society to a very different country such as India provides a useful reference point in this regard, particularly as represented in the perspectives of well-known social scientists such as André Béteille, Veena Das, and J P S Uberoi. Béteille (2002), with his extensive background in stratification and comparative research, advocates a highly sceptical and committed type of sociology, synthesising it with social anthropology. Das is particularly known for her work on pain and suffering, arguing for a more moral approach to society (1995), along with an impressive sensitivity to the colonial context and related dynamics (2003). Uberoi has written a wide range of works examining the relationships among modernity, science, and culture (1978, 1984, 2002), highlighting the clear drawbacks of traditional European positivism. He states that 'Until we can concentrate on decolonisation, learn to nationalise our problems and take our poverty seriously, we shall continue to be both colonial and unoriginal' (1968: 123).

Many other Indian sociologists such as Satish Saberwal (1979), A R Momin (1972), and Yogendra Singh (1984) have also questioned the use of social science models developed in western cultures, equating them with a type of academic colonialism, arguing instead for their local adaptation. Since each culture is relatively unique, their social structures need to be understood in the context of their indigenous rather than external cultures. Finally, M S A Rao (1982: 25) has commented on the innovative developments reflected in the work of the above authors, highlighting developments in ethnosociology, structuralism and structural sociology. In general, given their sensitivity to the colonial context, these perspectives advocate a far broader, more committed type of sociology dedicated to appreciating the complexity of the Indian society and its pressing social needs, in contrast to American social science's traditional obsession with 'objectivity' and empirical research.

### Conclusions

We began our discussion by commenting on American professional sociology's apparently indirect rather than direct approach to contemporary crises of violence and continuing social problems of mass destruction. Our analysis partly accounted for such limited relevance by examining the manner in which the discipline typically engages in scientific projection during periods of conspicuous social progress and social reformism, or more normative projection in situations interpreted as unstable and problematic. We concluded that empirical or social order

is achieved through the scientific application of these academics' values or ideologies to the dynamic societal context in which they operate

This kind of projection—scientific, normative or both—in light of the profession's relatively homogeneous, elitist establishment and ongoing development, has tended to be aggravated by the discipline's apparently endless desire for scientific recognition, assumed social rationality, and almost total domination by positivistic methods. These tendencies, in turn, have been strengthened and reinforced by the larger culture's bureaucratised, rationalised environment, commodifying books and critical thought, significantly reducing self-awareness and ameliorative, practical concerns. Furthermore, the present era with its economic, security, and international order priorities, has only served to make this simplistic approach to modern society even less critical, aware, or insightful. Quite the contrary—most academics are primarily concerned with protecting their jobs, security, and economic welfare regardless of the academic and intellectual costs involved.

Responding to these major limitations, recommendations included the major use of sociological portraits, taking a more 'phronetic' approach to the discipline, adoption of more complex, committed perspectives, professional inclusion of minority sociology to diversify the discipline, and application of valuable non-American viewpoints, particularly those developed by social scientists in India.

What kinds of conclusions does this analysis imply? A number of them appear to emerge as follows:

- 1 Projection of some kind is, no doubt, inherent in any attempt to understand the world around us. Neither science nor reformism contains any endemic drawbacks—only in the manner they are used. Thus, the limitations of those engaging in inevitable projection of whatever type require appreciation.
- 2 A unique history moulds any profession or discipline, reflected understandably in its present state. Again, understanding the nature and implications of that history is vital.
- 3 No field could be expected to escape the major influence of its homogeneous cultural context completely. Nevertheless, their constraining effects and vital alternatives require delineation and awareness.
- 4 Finally, attempts to modify a profession significantly, in light of its long history, elitism, resources, and academic institutionalisation, governed by majority rule will, no doubt, meet with limited and possibly only minor success. However, the attempt should still be made, particularly in the light of current circumstances. Fuller understanding of its endemic limitations represents at least a first step in this direction.

Many sociologists appear to cope with their professional qualms and insecurities in several ways these include focusing on their own achievements, participating in the academic rat race with limited enthusiasm, keeping their doubts to themselves, focusing on teaching and their students, tending to community affairs, viewing the past with nostalgia, or looking forward to (hopefully early) retirement Nevertheless, they continue to feel that both the profession and discipline are 'missing something', particularly when it comes to fully understand the 'human condition', social complexity, cultural diversity, and meaningful, practical, policy alternatives In this connection, the development of greater self-awareness as outlined in the above discussion, along with enactment of a kind of sociology that is both more 'reflexive' (Gouldner 1970) in its self-consciousness, 'reflective' (Mohan and Kinloch 2000) in its practitioners' background and practices, on the one hand, and more globally oriented in its perspectives, on the other, might at least constitute a helpful movement in this direction

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# Caste Variations in Reproductive Health Status of Women: A Study of Three Eastern States

*Papia Raj and Aditya Raj*

*Based on the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-I (1992-93) data, this paper analyses the reproductive health status of women across various caste groups in three eastern states of India—Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. A Reproductive Health Index (RHI) is computed from a series of reproductive health indicators (contraceptive use, birth order, birth interval, antenatal care and skilled assistance at delivery) for the caste groups (based on H H Risley's classification). Multivariate regression analysis is carried out to understand the impact of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics on reproductive health. It is observed that RHI is highest in West Bengal, followed by Orissa and Bihar. Caste variations in the RHI are discernible in all three states, with the upper-caste women showing higher reproductive health status as compared with the lower-caste women.*

## Introduction

In India, caste plays a major role in the life of her people, influencing their socioeconomic activities, and in turn regulating their health status. S N M Kopparty (1991) shows the variation in the utilisation of health resources among different caste groups and its impact on their health status. Similarly, Thomas Matthai (1996) states that, because of differential literacy rate and economic status between the scheduled castes and non-scheduled castes, there is also a difference in their health status. In caste-based Indian society, women of the lower castes are the worst hit, as they suffer from double discrimination. First, in the patriarchal society women are discriminated against men, as they have to bear the burden of household work demanding much time and energy without adequate compensatory diet. And second, a lower-caste woman, owing to her poor socioeconomic status, also experiences social deprivation. Both these factors are detrimental to the health status of women, especially their reproductive health.

Given that caste is important in the life of an individual, in this paper we examine the caste variations in the reproductive health of women. There are as yet no studies on the reproductive health status among different caste

groups The National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-1 (1992-93) gives us an opportunity to conduct such a study, as it has compiled data on caste (International Institute of Population Sciences 1994) Though a second round of NFHS also collected similar data in 1997-98 (International Institute of Population Sciences 2000), we have not considered that data in this study for two reasons First, when the NFHS-2 was conducted, the state of Bihar had been divided into Bihar and Jharkhand And second, since the NFHS is a sample survey, and not a longitudinal survey, comparing the two sets of data would not throw much light on the actual situation

### **Reproductive Health in India**

Women and child health received a major impetus after the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo (1994), which recommended that the participant countries should implement unified programmes for Reproductive and Child Health (RCH), as it was considered essential to human welfare and development In the ICPD, reproductive health was defined as the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes (ICPD Programme of Action, paragraph 7.2) India, being a signatory to the ICPD, strongly supports the Programme of Action and, since the 1990s, the Government of India has introduced the RCH Approach This approach includes the ability (of couples) to reproduce and regulate their fertility Women can go through pregnancy and childbirth safely, the outcome of pregnancy is successful as for maternal and infant survival and well-being, and couples can have sexual relations free of fear of pregnancy and of contracting diseases

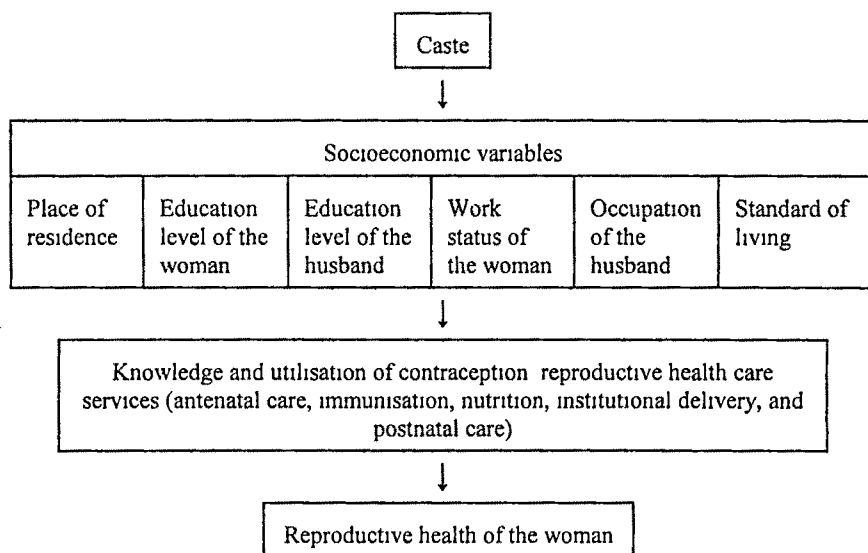
Indian women, by and large, have a poor reproductive health status, as is evident from the NFHS data For assessing the reproductive health of a woman, the NFHS-1 incorporated the following variables antenatal care (ANC), immunisation of pregnant women, institutional deliveries, and assistance at delivery Proper ANC is crucial for the good health of both mother and child NFHS-1 data show that, among all the women who have given any live birth in the four years preceding the survey, only 62.3 percent of mothers have received various types of ANC services All pregnant women are expected to receive doses of tetanus toxoid vaccine to be protected against tetanus Two or more doses of this vaccine during pregnancy were received by only 53.8 percent of all mothers The situation is not much different as for the coverage for iron and folic acid tablets, which forms a prophylaxis against nutritionally induced anaemia among pregnant women According to the NFHS-1, only 50.5 percent of women had this

coverage. Another important thrust of maternal health services is the encouragement of institutional deliveries attended by trained health professionals to ensure better health for the mother and the child. The proportion of institutional births (25.6 percent) is very low in India.

Both international and national organisations—such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Population Association International (PAI) and Population Foundation of India (PFI)—have attempted to measure the reproductive health of women with the help of certain sets of indicators. The most recent index of reproductive health has been computed by PAI (2001). It puts India in moderate rank, with a score of 44.8 on a scale ranging from 0 to 100.

However, despite government programmes and intervention, the reproductive health status of women in India presents a sorry scenario, mainly because of the socioeconomic forces that influence reproductive health. Caste is one social institution in India whose impact on the life of her people cannot be exaggerated. To understand the influence of caste on reproductive health of women a schematic framework is developed. From Figure 1 it follows that caste influences socioeconomic variables that include educational status, work status and standard of living. These variables, in turn, have an impact on knowledge and utilisation of contraception and reproductive health care services, ultimately affecting the reproductive health of women.

Figure 1 Schematic framework for analysing the influence of caste on reproductive health of women



### **The Study**

The study area is restricted to the eastern region of India, comprising the states of Bihar (that is, former Bihar, including Jharkhand), Orissa and West Bengal. Obviously, the caste structure is not uniform across the country, and there are significant regional variations. We use a modified version of H H Risley's (1881) classification (see Appendix 1) as his survey was undertaken when the geographical area comprising these three states was administratively united. In these three states the caste structure is more or less similar due to their historical moorings. Moreover, the authors' acquaintance with the area facilitated better understanding of the behaviour of various caste groups.

The three main objectives of the study are

- 1 To analyse the variations in the reproductive health status of currently married women belonging to different caste groups in the states of Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal
- 2 To compute a Reproductive Health Index (RHI), for the various castes in these three states
- 3 To examine the influence of social and economic factors on the reproductive health of women, with special reference to their caste membership

The data used in this study were obtained from the NFHS-1 (1992-93) conducted between April 1992 and September 1993. The Survey covered more than 89,000 ever-married women in the age-group 13-49 in twenty-four states and the union territory of Delhi, it was, thus, the largest of its kind in the subcontinent. It provides national- and state-level estimates of fertility, infant and child mortality, family planning and maternal and child health. In this study, we have drawn data from the following sections of the Women's Questionnaire used in the Survey: the respondent's background, reproduction, contraception, pregnancy and breast feeding, husband's background, and women's work. For analysis, only those women who have given any live birth during the four years preceding the survey (1988-91) are considered, and only the recent birth is taken into account. Since the main purpose of the study is to analyse the impact of caste on reproductive health, only the Hindu women falling in this category are considered.

The reproductive health indicators used in the present study are as follows: contraceptive usage (any method), birth order, birth interval, antenatal care (any type), status of immunisation of women during pregnancy (doses of Tetanus toxoid vaccination), obtaining iron and folic

acid tablets, place of delivery, assistance during delivery, weight of the child at birth<sup>1</sup>

### **Caste Variations in Reproductive Health Indicators**

Table 1 presents caste variations in the reproductive health indicators 'Use of contraceptives' is an important indicator of reproductive health. In Bihar, only 55.7 percent of the couples use contraceptives, and there exist castewise variations among the High Caste (73 percent of the couples use contraceptives, followed by the Highest Caste (62.2 percent). The rural-urban difference in contraceptive use is large, and it is more so in case of the upper castes and the Intermediate Caste. The high rural-urban disparity among the upper castes is because, unlike in urban areas, in rural areas there are some taboos attached to the use of contraceptives, and these taboos are more observed by the upper castes. Also, in rural areas, the joint family system is still prevalent among the upper castes, which are land-owning communities. The joint family norms regulate the reproductive behaviour of the couples and hence affect the use of contraceptives. In urban areas, due to the prevalence of nuclear households, even among the upper castes such controls do not operate and the couples are relatively free to exercise their reproductive choices. In the case of the lower castes that are generally engaged in agricultural labour, the joint family system does not exist even in rural areas. Hence, their reproductive behaviour does not change much with place of residence. Apart from this, the upper castes have a higher literacy rate in urban areas as compared with the lower castes, and this increases their awareness about the various family-planning methods, thus influencing the use of contraceptives.

Orissa also presents a similar situation where 59.9 percent of the couples presently use contraceptives. The highest proportion of contraceptive use is among the High Caste (79.2 percent), followed by the Highest Caste (72.5 percent), while less than 60 percent of the couples among the Intermediate, Lowest and Low Castes use contraceptives. Striking differences are also noticed between rural and urban areas in the use of contraceptives. In West Bengal, 66 percent of the couples use contraceptives, and, unlike in Bihar and Orissa, there is not much caste variation. In fact, the proportion of couples using contraceptives is the same for the High Caste and the Low Caste (that is, 69 percent). There is also not much rural-urban difference among these caste groups. In West Bengal, the marginal difference in the use of contraceptives by various castes is due to the caste structure being not as rigid as in Bihar and Orissa. One reason for this is that the reform movements in Bengal had liberalised the caste system. Moreover, the relatively

Table 1 Caste-Group and Reproductive Health Indicators - Eastern Region of India, 1992-93

State/Caste-Group	Presently using contraceptives			Birth order (<4)			Birth interval (>24 months)			Availed ANC			Skilled assistance at birth		
	R	U	C	R	U	C	R	U	C	R	U	C	R	U	C
Bihar															
Highest	59.9	70.7	62.2	60.9	72.0	63.2	40.4	42.7	40.9	43.0	70.7	48.8	21.2	53.7	28.0
High	65.7	85.2	73.0	61.8	82.0	69.3	41.2	57.4	47.2	53.9	91.8	68.1	37.3	80.3	53.4
Intermediate	47.5	81.1	53.3	62.1	59.8	61.7	36.1	41.0	36.9	30.4	64.8	36.4	15.9	54.9	22.6
Low	49.9	62.1	51.6	58.1	74.2	60.3	35.1	47.0	36.7	28.6	78.8	35.5	09.2	59.1	16.1
Lowest	51.0	55.1	51.7	58.3	55.1	57.7	39.4	44.9	40.4	34.1	46.2	36.3	13.2	37.2	17.6
Total	52.0	71.6	55.7	60.2	67.0	61.4	37.6	45.5	39.1	34.3	68.7	40.8	15.9	55.7	23.4
Orissa															
Highest	68.3	78.6	72.5	75.0	90.5	81.4	50.0	47.6	49.0	71.3	90.5	88.3	38.3	69.0	51.0
High	77.8	81.4	79.2	66.7	93.0	77.4	50.8	44.2	48.1	74.6	88.4	80.2	33.3	55.8	42.5
Intermediate	55.8	66.7	58.6	66.5	66.7	66.5	52.4	61.6	54.7	66.0	81.9	70.1	19.4	52.8	28.1
Low	52.3	62.9	54.8	68.5	67.7	68.3	63.2	47.6	59.5	62.2	83.9	67.4	15.7	50.0	23.9
Lowest	54.4	67.7	57.5	67.9	61.5	66.4	60.0	63.1	60.7	60.0	72.3	62.9	13.5	47.7	21.4
Total	56.3	68.8	59.7	68.2	72.3	69.3	58.4	52.9	56.9	64.4	82.7	69.3	18.7	53.2	28.0
West Bengal															
Highest	71.0	69.0	70.3	80.4	79.3	80.0	50.5	37.9	46.1	83.2	89.7	85.5	39.3	89.7	57.0
High	68.9	69.0	68.9	77.0	93.1	82.2	41.0	48.3	43.3	72.1	96.6	80.0	45.9	89.7	60.0
Intermediate	63.5	68.6	64.4	75.8	76.5	75.9	40.6	52.9	43.0	79.0	86.3	80.4	32.9	80.4	41.9
Low	68.9	66.7	68.6	76.8	70.8	76.0	49.0	37.5	47.4	78.1	91.7	80.0	31.1	75.0	37.1
Lowest	62.6	54.8	61.5	69.2	61.3	68.1	47.2	38.7	46.0	74.9	74.2	74.8	23.6	41.9	26.1
Total	65.9	66.3	66.0	75.0	76.7	75.4	45.6	43.5	45.1	77.8	87.6	79.8	32.1	77.7	41.6

Note: Figures refer to percentages. R = Rural, U = Urban, C = Combined

higher literacy rate in rural areas of West Bengal has fostered a more liberal outlook, which positively influences the reproductive behaviour

The higher the birth order of a child, the more adverse the effect it has on the reproductive health of the mother, as it means repeated number of pregnancies. In Bihar, 38.6 percent of the live births are higher order births, that is, birth order of equal to or more than four. With a higher proportion of their members using contraceptives, the upper castes have low proportions of high order births. The rural-urban difference in birth order among the caste groups is high, except for the Lowest and the Intermediate castes. This is obviously the result of the prevalence of joint family system in rural areas which encourages couples to have more number of children. Moreover, in rural areas, where the standard of living is not very high and the economy is labour-based, children are viewed as an economic asset, and more so among the lower castes, who are also generally the low income-groups. On the other hand, in urban areas, the cost of bringing up a child is relatively high. This also is responsible for the differential birth order between the rural and urban areas.

In Orissa, 30.7 percent of the births are of higher order, a large difference in birth order is noticed among the various castes in this state. As in Bihar, the proportion of higher order births is much less in urban areas and irrespective of caste affiliation. In West Bengal, all the castes have fairly small proportion of higher order births, ranging between 20 percent (Highest Caste) and 31.9 percent (Lowest Caste). Since there is not much variation in the pattern of contraceptive use between the rural and urban areas in West Bengal, it gets reflected in the birth-order pattern.

Apart from birth order, it is also the interval between two births that has a bearing on the reproductive health of a woman. A little over 39 percent of all live births in Bihar have a birth interval of more than or equal to twenty-four months, without much caste variation. In Orissa, 56.9 percent of the live births have a birth interval of equal to or more than twenty-four months. The proportion of births with a higher interval is almost 60 percent among the lower castes, while it is only 48 percent among the upper castes. Since, in West Bengal, only 25 percent of the births are of higher order, and among the lower order births 32 percent are of first order, the proportion of births with large intervals is quite low (45.1 percent). This applies to all castes.

Antenatal care (ANC) is one of the four most important pillars of safe motherhood along with family planning, safe delivery and essential obstetric care (WHO 1996). In the study region, there is a large difference in the proportion of women receiving ANC: it is only 40.8 percent in Bihar, while it is 79.8 percent in West Bengal. In Bihar, the proportion of lower-caste women receiving ANC is much less (35.5 percent) compared with their upper-caste counterparts (68.1 percent). This difference is accentuated in



rural areas, where only 34.3 percent of the women receive any type of ANC—either visited by a health worker or going to a clinic. However, the position of the Lowest Caste does not improve much with place of residence: it is 34.1 percent in rural areas and 46.2 percent in urban areas.

Lack of accessibility to ANC services is a major cause for this. Accessibility refers to both physical accessibility (in terms of distance travelled) and accessibility in terms of cost incurred to avail such services. Long distance and inadequate public transportation facilities are common constraints to health-care utilisation, and this is more so in rural areas (Thaddeus and Maine 1994). This applies to rural Bihar too, where the availability of medical facilities does not meet the requirements of the people, and the transport infrastructure is underdeveloped. Also, in the rural areas of the states under study, the residential pattern follows caste hierarchy: the houses of the upper castes are located in the centre of the village, and those of the other castes are located farther away from them according to their ritual and occupational status. As a result, the lower castes are usually settled on the periphery of the village.

Moreover, in Bihar, as is well known, the family-planning programme is not a success story, and the health workers visiting homes is also rare. Also, as elsewhere in rural India, land continues to be the most important source of income, and the upper castes are usually the land-owning communities (Chakravarti 2001). This contributes to the improvement in the standard of living of the upper castes in rural areas. The lower castes, on the other hand, are also down in the hierarchy as for their economic status and they cannot afford the transport-cost for availing the ANC services if they are located at a far off place. Even the private clinics, due to their exorbitant charges, are out of their reach. All these lead to a drop in the percentage of lower-caste women receiving ANC. On the contrary, in urban areas, physical inaccessibility is not a problem, as there are many clinics and the transport system is also better. Moreover, urban areas are free from caste-based settlement patterns, which fact too acts facilitates lower-caste women receiving ANC. Lower standard of living and lack of knowledge among the urban lower castes may be responsible for less proportion of their women availing ANC.

Similar caste variations are noticed in Orissa, too. Among the upper castes more than 80 percent receive ANC, while among the lower castes the figure is below 70 percent. The ANC coverage is higher in West Bengal, without much rural (77.8 percent) and urban (87.6 percent) differentiation. There is also not much caste variation in availing the ANC services.

Apart from the ANC services, a birth attended by skilled health professionals assures safe delivery and reduces risk to the life of the mother and the child. In Bihar, skilled health professionals attend only 23.4 percent of the births. The situation is grimmer for the lower castes, as less than 20 percent

of their births are assisted by skilled health professionals. Only among the High Caste a majority (53.4 percent) of the births are assisted by skilled health professionals. Rural areas are worse off, as the figure for no caste exceeds 40 percent. This is due to the traditional outlook prevalent in rural societies, where most of the births still take place at home and are assisted by *dais* (traditional midwives) who are not very skilled and follow traditional practices, some of which are unhygienic. Even in urban areas, the situation is not satisfactory for the lower castes: skilled health professionals assist only 37.2 percent of the births among the Lowest Caste, but the corresponding percentage is 80.3 for the High Caste. It is perhaps the inaccessibility due to high cost that influences this variation in urban areas. The government hospitals lack adequate infrastructures in terms of both equipment and personnel, while the poor lower-caste people cannot afford the services of private hospitals.

In Orissa too, skilled health professionals assist a very low proportion of (28 percent) births, and a large caste variation is noticed. The upper castes have higher proportion of births assisted by skilled professionals (51 percent). Skilled assistance at delivery is also not very satisfactory in West Bengal (41.6 percent), and caste variations exist: 60 percent of the births among the High Caste are assisted by skilled professionals, in contrast to 26.1 percent, among the Lowest Caste.

To summarise, the caste differences are the highest in Bihar, followed by Orissa and West Bengal. In all the three states, the upper castes are in a better position in comparison with the lower castes. The Intermediate Caste shares more characteristics of the lower castes than that of the upper castes. The place of residence has a great influence on the reproductive health status of women as is evident from the striking rural-urban differences in all the states for all the reproductive health indicators, with urban areas presenting a better picture.

### Reproductive Health Index

For a comprehensive understanding of caste differences in reproductive health status of women, based on the above discussed indicators, a Reproductive Health Index (RHI) has been computed for the various caste groups (see Appendix 2). The range of this index varies between '0' and '5'. The higher the value of the index, the better the reproductive health status of the women. Based on the mean value of the index, women are grouped under two broad categories of reproductive health status: High RHI and Low RHI.

In Bihar, as most of the reproductive health indicators for women are poor, only 39.1 percent of them show High RHI (see Table 2a). Caste variation is also large: 64.4 percent of the High Caste women have High RHI, and

only 36.5 percent of the Lowest Caste women have High RHI. Though in urban areas 65.3 percent of women have High RHI, this percentage drops to 33 in rural areas.

Table 2a Caste-group and RHI - Bihar, 1992-93

Caste Groups	Low RHI (%)			High RHI (%)		
	Rural	Urban	Combined	Rural	Urban	Combined
Highest	57.65	34.15	52.70	42.35	65.85	47.30
High	50.00	11.48	35.58	50.00	88.52	64.42
Intermediate	70.43	35.25	64.36	29.57	64.75	35.64
Low	74.09	34.85	68.68	25.91	65.15	31.32
Lowest	65.92	52.56	63.51	34.08	47.44	36.49
Total	66.97	34.72	60.89	33.03	65.28	39.10

The proportion of women having High RHI is 57.2 percent in Orissa (see Table 2b), with the upper castes holding a much higher position in comparison with the lower castes. Orissa has a sharp rural-urban difference as regards reproductive health status of women. Irrespective of the place of residence, the upper castes have better index in Orissa.

The reproductive health status of women in West Bengal is the best as compared with that of Bihar and Orissa. 67.4 percent of women in this state have High RHI (see Table 2c). The difference among the highest (Highest Caste = 77 percent) and the lowest values (Lowest Caste = 58 percent) is only 19 percentage points.

### Correlation among Predictor Variables

A correlation matrix has been constructed to understand the relationship among the predictor variables. For correlation, education of women has been re-coded as '0 = illiterate' and '1 = literate', and husband's occupation has been coded as '0 = agriculture and other primary activities' and '1 = others'. The other codes remain unchanged. The results of correlation are presented statewise. Only those results for which the 'r' value is more than 0.2 and that are statistically significant are discussed here. But, to highlight the influence of caste, all correlation results that are statistically significant against caste are discussed.

Table 2b Caste-group and RHI - Orissa, 1992-93

Caste Groups	Low RHI (%)			High RHI (%)		
	Rural	Urban	Combined	Rural	Urban	Combined
Highest	31 67	7 14	21 57	68 33	92 86	78 43
High	33 33	6 98	22 64	66 67	93 02	77 36
Intermediate	44 17	29 17	40 29	55 83	70 83	59 71
Low	54 82	29 03	48 65	45 18	70 97	51 35
Lowest	53 95	36 92	50 00	46 05	63 08	50 00
Total	49 36	25 14	42 83	50 64	74 86	57 17

Table 2c Caste-group and RHI - West Bengal, 1992-93

Caste Groups	Low RHI (%)			High RHI (%)		
	Rural	Urban	Combined	Rural	Urban	Combined
Highest	29 0	12 1	23 0	71 0	87 9	77 0
High	34 4	6 9	25 6	65 6	93 1	74 4
Intermediate	35 2	21 6	32 6	64 8	78 4	67 4
Low	34 4	25 0	33 1	65 6	75 0	66 9
Lowest	42 1	41 1	42 0	57 9	58 1	58 0
Total	35 9	20 2	32 6	64 1	79 8	67 4

*Bihar*

The correlation matrix for predictor variables for Bihar is presented in Table 3a. Age of the woman and experience of child-loss has a positive correlation ( $r = 0.27$ ). It means that experience of child-loss is higher for women of older age-groups as compared with women of younger age-group. Caste also shows a negative correlation with child-loss ( $r = -0.07$ ), as more women among the lower castes experience child-loss. This is because of the low

Table 3a Correlation coefficients among predictor variables – Bihar, 1992-93

	Age	Child-loss	Residence	Caste	Woman's education	Woman's work status	Husband's occupation	Exposure to the mass media	Spousal communication
Age	1								
Child-loss	0.2703**	1							
Residence	0.0040	-0.1024**	1						
Caste	0.0478*	-0.0678**	0.0699**	1					
Woman's education	-0.0899**	-0.1719**	0.3197**	0.2282**	1				
Woman's work status	0.0843**	0.1386**	-0.1990**	-0.1579**	-0.2721**	1			
Husband's occupation	0.0642**	-0.1020**	0.3377**	0.1367**	0.3546**	-0.2203**	1		
Exposure to the mass media	-0.0570**	-0.1320**	0.3371**	0.1415**	0.4860**	-0.2451**	0.3304**	1	
Spousal communication	0.0137	-0.0670**	0.1213**	0.0872**	0.2202**	-0.0949**	0.0995**	0.1622**	1

Note \* Significant at 5 percent level of confidence, \*\* Significant at 1 percent level of confidence

literacy rate among the lower castes coupled with lower standard of living, hindering awareness of and accessibility to medical facilities

Caste and place of residence are positively correlated ( $r = 0.07$ ), which means that upper caste women usually live in urban areas. Place of residence has a positive correlation with education of women ( $r = 0.32$ ). As expected, women in urban areas are more literate than those in rural areas. The negative correlation between work status of the woman and place of residence ( $r = -0.20$ ) suggests that women in rural areas are engaged in work. In rural areas, due to the agrarian economy, which is labour intensive, even the womenfolk join hands with the male members of the family in the field, and this raises the work-participation rate among rural women. Since most of the men are engaged in agriculture in rural areas, there exists a positive correlation between place of residence and occupation of the husband ( $r = 0.34$ ). Exposure to the mass media has a positive correlation with place of residence ( $r = 0.34$ ), that is, women in urban areas are relatively better exposed to the mass media than those in rural areas.

There is a positive correlation between caste and the following variables: education of the woman ( $r = 0.23$ ), husband's occupation ( $r = 0.14$ ) and exposure to the mass media ( $r = 0.14$ ). These correlations indicate that the literate women are from the upper castes and their husbands are engaged mainly in non-primary activities. These women are also better exposed to the mass media. Work status of the woman and caste are negatively correlated ( $r = -0.16$ ).

Education of the woman is negatively correlated with her work status ( $r = -0.27$ ), but is positively correlated with husband's occupation ( $r = 0.35$ ). It follows from the results that illiterate women are generally working and their husbands are engaged in either agriculture or other primary activities. Exposure to the mass media ( $r = 0.49$ ) and spousal communication ( $r = 0.22$ ) show a positive correlation with education of the woman, as exposure to the mass media is high among literate women and this increases communication among the couples.

A negative correlation is observed between work status of the woman and husband's occupation ( $r = -0.22$ ), which means that if husbands are engaged in agriculture or other primary activities then the work-participation rate among their wives is also high. Such a situation is perhaps explained by the labour-intensive nature of primary activities, and the family being the main source of labour for them. Work status of the woman is negatively correlated with exposure to the mass media ( $r = -0.24$ ) because more of the working women are settled in rural areas, where exposure to the mass media is limited, especially so in Bihar, where electricity supply is yet to reach all villages and the electronic media are noticeably absent. Also, owing to the low literacy rate, the print media is not widespread either. For those women

whose husbands are engaged in agriculture there is less exposure to the mass media ( $r = 0.33$ )

### *Orissa*

Table 3b presents the correlation coefficients for predictor variables in Orissa. It is seen that age of the woman has a positive correlation with experience of child-loss ( $r = 0.24$ ), suggesting that, as in Bihar, the experience of child-loss for women in older age-groups is higher. There is a positive correlation between caste and place of residence ( $r = 0.12$ ). Place of residence also has a positive correlation with husband's occupation ( $r = 0.32$ ) and exposure to mass media ( $r = 0.23$ ). Thus, women in urban areas, with their husbands mainly engaged in non-agricultural activities, are also better exposed to the mass media.

Caste has a positive correlation with education of the woman ( $r = 0.26$ ), as in Bihar, indicating that more women of lower castes are illiterate than those of upper castes. A negative correlation, though small, is observed between caste and work status of the woman ( $r = -0.07$ ). As a corollary, we find a positive correlation between caste and husband's occupation ( $r = 0.22$ ), showing that lower-caste males are engaged in agricultural activities. Moreover, there is a positive correlation between caste and exposure to the mass media ( $r = 0.21$ ). Hence, increasing status along the caste hierarchy leads to a decrease in exposure to the mass media.

Education of the woman shows a positive correlation with husband's occupation ( $r = 0.35$ ) and exposure to the mass media ( $r = 0.43$ ). Husbands of literate women pursue mainly non-primary occupations, and these women are more exposed to the mass media. Husband's occupation, however, has a positive correlation with exposure to the mass media ( $r = 0.28$ ). This shows that women are better exposed to the mass media if their husbands are not engaged in agriculture or other primary activities. A positive correlation is also noticed between exposure to the mass media and spousal communication ( $r = 0.22$ ), that is, spousal communication increases with an increase in exposure to the mass media.

### *West Bengal*

Table 3c presents the correlation coefficients for predictor variables in West Bengal. Age of the woman shows a positive correlation with experience of child-loss ( $r = 0.24$ ), like in Bihar and Orissa. In West Bengal, caste and child-loss are negatively correlated ( $r = -0.08$ ), indicating that experience of child-loss is common among lower-caste women. A positive correlation between place of residence and husband's occupation ( $r = 0.36$ ) means that

Table 3b Correlation coefficients among predictor variables - Orissa, 1992-93

	Age	Child-loss	Residence	Caste	Woman's education	Woman's work status	Husband's occupation	Exposure to the mass media	Spousal communication
Age	1								
Child-loss	0.2405**	1							
Residence	-0.0086	-0.1082**	1						
Caste	-0.0178	-0.0466	0.1222**	1					
Woman's education	-0.0225	-0.1277**	0.1433**	0.2573**	1				
Woman's work status	0.0237	0.0655*	-0.0366	-0.0678*	-0.1633**	1			
Husband's occupation	0.0133	-0.1023**	0.3223**	0.2207**	0.3517**	-0.1118**	1		
Exposure to the mass media	-0.0250	-0.1153**	0.2319**	0.2103**	0.4276**	-0.1337**	0.2804**	1	
Spousal communication	0.0546	-0.0341	0.0884**	0.0519*	0.1755**	-0.0100**	0.1576**	0.2165**	1

Note \* Significant at 5 percent level of confidence, \*\* Significant at 1 percent level of confidence



Table 3c Correlation coefficients among predictor variables - West Bengal, 1992-93

	Age	Child-loss	Residence	Caste	Woman's education	Woman's work status	Husband's occupation	Exposure to the mass media	Spousal communication
Age	1								
Child-loss	0.2397**	1							
Residence	0.0903**	-0.0488	1						
Caste	0.0194	-0.0785*	0.1957**	1					
Woman's education	-0.0878**	-0.1866**	0.1772**	0.2094**	1				
Woman's work status	0.1513**	0.1094**	-0.0747*	-0.0662*	-0.2454**	1			
Husband's occupation	0.0358	-0.0778*	0.3609**	0.1538**	0.3030**	-0.1537**	1		
Exposure to the mass media	-0.0451	-0.1458**	0.2156**	0.1600**	0.3606**	-0.0664**	0.1802**	1	
Spousal communication	-0.0221	-0.0637	-0.0098	0.0207	0.1289**	-0.0410	0.0416	0.1536**	1

Note \* Significant at 5 percent level of confidence, \*\* Significant at 1 percent level of confidence

in rural areas males are involved in agriculture or other primary activities. In urban areas women are better exposed to the mass media, and this is also evident from the positive correlation between these two variables ( $r = 0.21$ ).

### Multivariate Analysis

The logistic regression analysis (see Table 4) represents the influence of demographic and socioeconomic conditions on RHI. The results for the eastern region of India show that all the predictor variables affect the reproductive health of women, as the odds-ratio is statistically significant. When other variables are controlled, caste is observed to be an important variable influencing reproductive health of women. High Caste women are 1.8 times more likely to have High RHI as compared with the lower-caste women. This is because the upper-caste women enjoy better socioeconomic status that influences their reproductive choices and reproductive behaviour, thereby improving their reproductive health.

Age of the woman has an inverse relation with reproductive health. With an increase in age there is a decrease in the reproductive health status of women. Even experience of child-loss influences RHI. Women who have experienced child-loss are 39 percent less likely to have High RHI. Women's educational level and exposure to the mass media are important variables that exert a positive influence on reproductive health. Women exposed to the mass media are more informed and aware about various measures that affect reproductive health. However, women who have not discussed children with their husbands are less likely to have High RHI. Place of residence and husband's occupation are two other variables influencing RHI positively. The likelihood of High RHI is more among women who are settled in urban areas. Similarly, women whose husbands are not engaged in agriculture are more likely to have High RHI. On the other hand, work status of the woman shows an inverse relation with her reproductive health status. This is mainly because of the nature of women's job, which is mainly agricultural labour.

### Discussion

This study highlights the impact of caste on reproductive health of women in the eastern states of Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. It does not emphasise the overall status of the health-care system in these three states, as we are more concerned with the determinants of reproductive health of women at the individual level than with providing a generalised scenario. The study helps us to understand how even personal decisions like reproductive behaviour and reproductive choices are largely influenced by caste. One important finding of the study is that there persists an intra-regional differ-

Table 4 Logistic Regression Analysis for Reproductive Health Index in Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Eastern Region of India

Variable	Bihar			Orissa			West Bengal			Eastern Region		
	B	Sig	Exp (B)	B	Sig	Exp (B)	B	Sig	Exp (B)	B	Sig	Exp (B)
Age												
25-35	-0.3469	0.0006	0.7068***	-0.2662	0.0007	0.7663*	-1.5064	0	0.2217	-0.5149	0	0.5975***
35+	-0.6959	0.0027	0.4986***	-1.4697	0.0003	0.23***	-2.4203	0.0001	0.0889***	-1.129	0	0.3234***
Child-loss	-0.2991	0.0121	0.7415***	-0.5936	0.0001	0.5524***	-0.8501	0.0001	0.4274***	-0.4865	0	0.6148***
Residence	0.5913	0.0001	1.8064***	0.6191	0.0005	1.8573***	-0.1441	0.6133	0.8658	0.566	0	1.7612***
Caste												
Intermediate	0.067	0.1503	1.0693	-0.0453	0.537	0.9558	0.0352	0.8724	1.0358	0.0247	0.763	1.025
High	0.2638	0.0539	1.3019**	0.2062	0.3916	1.229	0.3182	0.2126	1.3746	0.1663	0.0986	1.1809*
Education												
Primary	0.8955	0	2.4484***	0.3789	0.0027	1.4607**	0.8696	0.0001	2.3859***	0.8455	0	2.3291***
Middle	1.0743	0.0004	2.928***	0.5671	0.0884	1.7631*	1.7827	0.0001	5.9458***	1.1741	0	3.2351***
High School +	1.7351	0	5.6697***	1.2762	0.0009	3.5831***	8.4787	0.4396	4811.25	1.7051	0	5.5021***
Work status	-0.2353	0.0595	0.7903***	0.223	0.2779	1.2498	-0.0133	0.9544	0.9868	-0.1393	0.1243	0.87*
Husband's occupation												
Professional	0.4584	0.1805	1.5816	0.2997	0.024	1.3494	1.3034	0.2751	3.6818	0.5239	0.0016	1.6886**
Service	0.2126	0.1774	1.2368*	0.4895	0.4667	1.6315***	0.3253	0.1939	1.3844	0.307	0.0016	1.3593***
Exposure to mass media	-0.6592	0	0.5172***	-0.659	0	0.5174***	-0.7679	0.0001	0.4631***	-0.7446	0	0.4749***
Spousal communication	-0.485	0	0.6157***	-0.0862	0.5505	0.9175	0.0167	0.9358	-0.9835	-0.3495	0	0.705***
Constant	0.5972	0.0003		0.6299	0.0049		2.553	0.3578		0.741	0	
-2 log likelihood	26641			14220.4			931.36			55070		

Significant at \* = 10 percent, \*\* = 5 percent, and \*\*\* = 1 percent levels of confidence

ence in reproductive health status of women. In the eastern region of India, caste differences in reproductive health are most pronounced in Bihar, while it is least so in West Bengal. This is mainly because the caste system in its rigid form is more a characteristic of the less developed state of Bihar, where caste and class are almost synonymous (Chakravarti 2001).

The economic differences among the caste groups widen the social inequalities among them. It is observed that poor educational status among women is an important reason for their poor reproductive health. The educational status of the woman is not free from her caste membership. In Bihar, according to the 1991 Census, literacy rate among the scheduled caste females is only 5.5 percent. During the colonial period the upper castes gained access to modern western education. The trend persists without much change in the educational status across the various castes. According to the 1931 Census, literacy rate was much higher among the Kayastha, Namasudra, Mahishya and Brahman caste groups, which constitute the upper castes, it was quite low among the Agarwals and Doms, who are the intermediate and lower castes. This implies that policies should be so framed that emphasis is placed on education, especially among the lower castes in rural areas, as caste variations are much higher in there.

Apart from trying to diversify the economy and provide better educational facilities, a major task for policy makers is to ensure that policies on reproductive and child health focus on campaigning the utilities of availing maternal care services and encouraging institutional deliveries assisted by professional health workers. It is observed that there prevails socioeconomic differences among the caste groups and this is one among various causes for inequality in their reproductive health status. Thus, different campaigning approaches should be adopted to reach different sections of the society to make the campaign more effective. Moreover, health workers should more regularly visit areas that comprise mainly of lower castes, who are deprived of access to formal maternal care due to reasons discussed earlier. Also, more auxiliary nurse and midwives should be trained so that births are assisted by skilled personnel.

This study leaves many gaps for future investigation. The caste classification considered in this study could be disaggregated for a detailed understanding of the influence of caste on the reproductive health of women. Our analysis is based on the individual level, the reproductive health status of various castes could also be studied at the district and state levels.

## **Note**

- 1 In the present study the status of immunisation of women is not included in the RHI as it shows a strong positive correlation with ANC utilisation (Table not included). Women

who avail ANC services usually receive two or more doses of tetanus toxoid injections. Similarly, iron and folic acid tablets also show a strong positive correlation with ANC, and hence it is also not included in the RHI. Since assistance at delivery is more important to determine the reproductive health status of women, in the RHI it is considered leaving out the place of delivery. Weight of the child at birth could not be included in the analysis as more than 70 percent of the children were not weighed at birth in the states covered by the study.

### Appendix 1: Caste classification

Caste classification (Risley 1881)	Caste classification (based on ritual status) used in the study
1 Brahman	Highest Caste
2 Baidyas, Kayasthas and Kshatriyas, and also Rajputs	High Caste
3 Clean Sudra Gandhabanik, Karmakar, Kansari, Kumar, Kuri, Madhunapit, Modak, Malakar, Napit, Sadgope, Sakhari, Tamil, Tanti, Tili, and Teli also Karan, Kustha and Raju of Midnapur, Khan of Rangpur and Sudra of East Bengal	Intermediate Caste
4 Clean castes with degraded Brahman Chasi Kaivarta, Mahishya and Goala	Low Caste
5 Caste lower than group '4' whose water is not taken by Brahman Sarak of Manbhum, Swarnakar, Sunri, Subarnabanik and Sutradhar	
6 Low caste who abstain from eating beef, pork and fowl Bagdi, Barua, Bhaskar, Cham, Chasa, Dhoba, Doai, Gauran, Hajang, Jaliakaibarta, Kalu, Kan, Kapali, Kpti, Malo and Jualo, Mech, Namasudra, Chandal, Palia, Patri, Pod, Paro, Rajbanshi, Koch, Sukli, Tipura and Tipra etc (This group includes most of the non-Aryan race and castes)	Lowest Caste
7 Unclean feeders Not served by Brahman, Dhoba or Napit Bauri, Chamar, Dom, Hari, Bhuimali, Kaora, Konai, Kora, Lodha, Mal, Muchi, Sialgir	

**Appendix 2: Reproductive Health Index**

Variable	Score
1 Contraceptive usage	Presently using contraceptives = 1 Not using contraceptives = 0
2 Birth order of the last child	Low birth order (<4) = 1 High birth order (4 and above) = 0
3 Birth interval between the last child and the second last child	Birth interval of 24 months and more = 1 Birth interval of less than 24 months = 0
4 Antenatal care	Received antenatal care (any type) = 1 Did not receive any antenatal Care = 0
5 Skilled assistance at delivery	Received skilled assistance at delivery = 1 Did not receive skilled assistance at delivery = 0
Reproductive Health Index (RHI)	Score range 0 to 5
Categories of RHI Low RHI High RHI	Range 0 to 2 3 and above

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## National Institute of Rural Development: A Study of an 'Epistemic Community'

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*This paper attempts to understand the structure and functioning of the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad in the context of the changing relationship between the social scientists and the statist enterprise of rural development. The paper does not intend merely to chronicle the range of activities that the NIRD has so far undertaken or is presently engaged in. Rather, the focus is on its role as a mediating agency between the state and a plethora of rural development policies, programmes and projects introduced since independence.*

The National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad has been devoted to the theory and practice of rural development. In this paper,<sup>1</sup> though, our interest lies in its being a mediatory institution between the state and the village, both conceptually and empirically. We believe that an empirical exploration of the institutional setting of NIRD can give us an understanding of how its institutional discourse on the 'village'/'rural' informs the statist construction of the village in the context of rural development. Conversely, we can also see if the statist agenda informs its discourse, which it faithfully disseminates to a wider audience.

The NIRD has access to the state by virtue of its personnel who perform various interrelated roles as experts, scholars, social scientists, or consultants. At the same time, its distinctive self-image as a rural development knowledge institution<sup>2</sup> heavily relies on its ostensible applied research orientation. Unlike universities and other research institutes, the generation of knowledge at the NIRD has policy implications. Consequently, it has continually to renew its claims as a storehouse of academic experts and professional social scientists by highlighting and marketing the professional training and academic/research backgrounds of its personnel. Expectedly, it serves as a bridge between the state and the professional world of social sciences.

For our purposes, what is important is that the NIRD provides a context where its personnel frequently draw upon the various discourses

concerning the village in their routine professional activities. Most of these personnel have social science backgrounds, and their scholarly orientations and academic training mediate their everyday negotiation of institutional expectations concerning policy-oriented applied research. This means that an examination of the activities of NIRD is replete with insights relating to the mechanisms through which discourses on the village crystallise at the level of such institutions.

On another plane, we can ascertain if the NIRD merely imparts a rational and scientific legitimacy to the statist agenda: Is it concerned with rendering political as apparently non-political, couched in the technical language of policy sciences? Probably, the NIRD endows specific political interests with universal legitimacy through the deployment of rational categories and technical language. Its privileged position within the state/society as a 'premier institute of rural development' has the potential to make the politics of rural development appear essentially technical, natural, objective, scientific and routinised. In any case, the NIRD embodies an institutional structure where politicians, bureaucrats, social scientists, academics, field level development functionaries, and workers in voluntary organisations and the NGOs interact with one another. It was, in fact, created with the specific mandate of bridging the gulf between the world of the villagers and the world of the officials, and to break the traditional norms of bureaucracy and replace them with new values through the mediation of social sciences (see Dube 1964: 225).

### **The Scope, Data and Methodology**

In the first section of this paper, we present a brief institutional profile of the NIRD, to situate its mediatory role in the overall matrix of rural development. This institutional profile is primarily based on published materials, such as annual reports, review committee reports, souvenirs, memoranda of association, fliers, booklets and leaflets, and other sundry brochures. The idea is to fathom the extent to which the NIRD has been responsive to the demands placed on it by the state, and to find out the influence that it has exerted on the state in planning and policy formulation for rural development.

In the second section of this paper, we focus on the scholar-practitioners working in the NIRD, to elaborate the relationship between the social scientists and the enterprise of rural development. We believe that our focus on the scholar-practitioners of rural development, apart from yielding valuable primary data, has many other payoffs. It helps us understand the nature and extent of scholar-practitioners' internalisation



of the institutional motto. After having interacted with them, we are better placed to judge whether their location in an institution of rural development is solely guided by career prospects and constraints. We gain entry into their professional world by listening to their statements. We come to know about the way they justify their existence as social scientists in such an institution, and what they do and do not do. The scholar-practitioners' perceptions and experiences of their location and role performance in the institutional setting not only add value and richness to our secondary data about the NIRD, but also show us how social scientific discourses have shaped, or have been constitutive of rural development interventions and state practices.

By moving within the institutional framework of the NIRD, we may identify its boundaries as an 'epistemic community'. An 'epistemic community', as defined by Alberto Arce and Norman Long (1992: 244), consists of persons sharing the same sources and types of knowledge. Since most scholar-practitioners in the NIRD are trained social scientists, the structure and contents of their communication networks within the institution are bound to generate insights regarding the changing contours of the relationship between the state and the social scientific community. Not only the social sciences have derived their expansionist impetus by virtue of state support, but also the state has drawn on social sciences and the academy in its quest for legitimacy.

Our discussion in the second section is primarily based on the data generated through focused interviews with a select group of scholar-practitioners. The researcher, with the help of an interview guide, conducted these interviews through intermittent field visits of varying duration, which were spread over a period of eight months (February–September 2003), at the NIRD. The interviews with the scholar-practitioners revolved around four main themes/issues. To set the tone of the discussion, we first concentrated on their academic background. The idea was to see if their professional training and expertise qualify them in any special way for the type of work that the NIRD undertakes.

Second, we wanted to know the scholar-practitioners' engagement with the 'village'/'rural'. How have they tried to resolve, in their professional career, the diverse meanings of the 'village'/'rural'? Or have they taken it as given? If so, what has been the source of this givenness? One source of this givenness could have been the institutional consensus. We wanted to probe this issue by delving into their orientations towards the institutional consensus on the 'village'/'rural'.

Third, we wanted to examine the scholar-practitioners' self-assessment of their roles as development professionals. How would they locate

themselves as trained social scientists/academics in the development enterprise? Of necessity, this would also bring in the issue of locating institutions like the NIRD in relation to the national-level rural development policies and programmes. The idea was to discern the receptivity to the findings of social scientific research by the state.

Lastly, we touched upon the scholar-practitioners' awareness of and disposition towards the emerging critiques of development in social scientific literature. Our aim was not to see if they are familiar with recent trends or the frontier areas in their respective disciplines. Rather, we wanted to find out if their social scientific training has enabled them to take a critical stance vis-à-vis the theories and practices of rural development. Have they been able to transcend the diagnostic or evaluative research that their institutions pride on? Or have they been mired in the technicalities of research assignments to such an extent that their training in social science disciplines remains incidental or without much significance?

After having discussed the life history of NIRD and our understanding of the professional world of scholar-practitioners of rural development, in the concluding section, we present a general assessment of the NIRD as a form of institutional intervention in the overall context of state-led rural development.

## I

### Origin, Metamorphosis, and Culmination

#### **The Origin: CISRCD**

The NIRD had its genesis in the Central Institute of Study and Research in Community Development (CISRCD), Mussoorie, which was established under the auspices of the Department of Rural Development, Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation, Government of India. The CISRCD started functioning from 9 June 1958 at Radha Bhavan, Mussoorie. As its nomenclature makes it clear, the CISRCD had two wings: Study and Research.

The establishment of CISRCD was a response to the burgeoning needs of the Community Development Programme (CDP) then being implemented in the country. It was premised upon the belief that 'it is not only machinery that becomes obsolete, one has to guard against obsolescence of the mind'.<sup>3</sup> In a vast country like India, the CDP necessitated a tremendous organisation of men and materials. The idea was to keep the field-level functionaries aware of the growing needs of

the society as defined by the CDP, and train them in those methods and techniques deemed appropriate for achieving its desired objectives

There was widespread perception that the programme of training so far followed did not embrace aspects related to the demands of CDP. Also, the then prevailing patterns and mode of administrative training did not involve all the key personnel engaged in, or otherwise directly or indirectly connected with, the CDP. For the orientation of the administrative and technical officers above the Block level, reliance had so far been placed exclusively on the organisation of periodic seminars. This kind of training was obviously inadequate. The need for setting up a Central Institute, which could apply itself to the task of giving a higher-level training to the key personnel—administrative as well as technical—of the state and central governments and non-officials in the philosophy and objectives of community development, was, therefore, keenly felt. The training organised by this Institute was proposed to be wider in scope so as to cover the economic, social and political goals that were set in relation to the CDP. It was supposed to inculcate in the administrators/officials the ethos of group-methods of work and to expose them to 'the sociological aspects of the programme'. It was against this backdrop of thinking that the central committee overseeing the CDP, under the chairmanship of the then Prime Minister, the late Jawaharlal Nehru, approved the idea of establishing a Central Institute of Study and Research in Community Development (CISRCD) (see NIRD 1958-59 1-19)<sup>4</sup>

### **The Metamorphosis: NICD**

In April 1962, the Central Institute of Study and Research in Community Development metamorphosed into the National Institute of Community Development (NICD). This coincided with the incorporation of the Institute for Instruction on Community Development, Rajpur (Dehradun), which was earlier known as the Trainers' Training Institute. In 1964, the NICD moved to the city of Hyderabad. On 1 November 1965, the NICD shed its formal governmental character and became an autonomous registered body, though continuing to work in close association with the central and state governments.

In the first few years of its establishment, though the NICD operated as part of the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperation, there were vigorous discussions concerning its autonomy. 'The Central Institute is growing, it is fundamental to its growth that it must grow in freedom. It must breathe the spirit of freedom, freedom to think, freedom

to search and investigate, freedom to argue and expound, freedom to doubt and even to deny' (NIRD 1960-61 2) An introspective mood was evident as the NICD took stock of its functioning and chronicled its research experience. This critical fervour can be seen in a set of questions that the Institute posed to itself

But what are the ingredients of creative research? Attracting outstanding research scholars? Productive academic atmosphere? Freedom and cooperation between researchers of different disciplines? What is the *sine qua non* of nucleating size before an institution can sustain self-generating growth? What flexibility in structure, in financing and in recruitment is conducive to accomplishment? How much 'outside' assistance can one absorb without losing its character or integrity? (NIRD 1965-66 24)

These questions seemed to have been resolved for the time being, as the NICD was made autonomous, from 1 November 1965, in pursuance of the decision of the Government of India. The acquisition of autonomy by the Institute resulted in minor restructuring of its governance as well.

However, the issue of the autonomy of NICD, which seemed to have been resolved in 1965, opened again. It was felt that even on matters of minor nature it was required to seek the approval of the Government of India. This undue interference by the Government was held responsible for the delay in administrative matters and the resultant uncertainty that adversely affected the effective functioning of the Institute. Almost after a decade of its having become formally autonomous, the Institute approached the then Minister of Rural Development, Shri Jagjivan Ram, on 11 January 1975, for the grant of institutional freedom similar to the Indian Institute of Public Administration, Delhi. The demand for freedom was linked to the expected improvement in the functioning of the Institute. It was argued that, if the Institute acquires substantive administrative freedom, it could function with ease and confidence.

### **The Culmination: NIRD**

In 1977, the National Institute of Community Development became the National Institute of Rural Development. As its Annual Report for 1977-78 puts it,

The General Council of the Institute at its meeting held on 20 September 1977 observed that in view of the fact that the Institute's activities were expected to have a much wider range concerning the whole field of rural development, it was proper that its name also should be indicative of its

objectives, and therefore, decided that it be changed to NIRD. The change has been effected accordingly (NIRD 1977-78: 2).

Although the Institute has been biased in favour of practical application of the various methods of rural development dealt within its research and training programmes, and has been focusing on the task of enriching and enlightening the field-level functionaries involved in rural development, by 1993 its self-image underwent a tremendous change. It began envisaging itself as the 'think tank' for the Ministry of Rural Development. Its hosting of the Joint Parliamentary Committee meeting on the 72nd Constitution Amendment Bill and the wide appreciation of its academic contribution to the said Bill seem to have greatly enhanced its self-confidence as an Institute of rural development. Subsequently, it was asked to draft a model bill to serve as a frame of reference for the preparation of the State Panchayati Raj bills. This further enhanced its reputation as a policy-making institute. The NIRD was asked to evolve model guidelines for transferring powers and functions to the Panchayati Raj institutions in respect of the twenty-nine items listed under the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution. It was also called upon to prepare an action plan for the training of more than 3.1 million Panchayati Raj functionaries in different states (see NIRD 1995-96: 1).

This self-image of NIRD as a 'think tank', owing to its having been entrusted with the aforementioned tasks of policy formulation, finds articulation in the changing rhetoric of its annual reports and other published brochures since the early 1990s. For example, the Annual Report for 1994-1995 describes the NIRD 'as one of the foremost institutes of rural development in Asia'. It claims to have endeavoured all along to provide inputs to translate into action the significance of rural development in national socioeconomic transformation. Furthermore, 'as a premier organisation of the Ministry, it assists in policy formulation and choice of options in rural development'. More important, it now fancies itself as striving towards energising the process of democratic decentralisation in rural areas.

## II

### **The Umbilical Chord: The Ministry and the NIRD**

One of our central concerns has been to find out how an institution like the NIRD has been mediating between the state and the village. In the case of NIRD, the state invariably means the Ministry of Rural Development (now called the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment). In our

conversations with the scholar-practitioners, the Ministry as a *leitmotif* figured quite prominently. No one ever felt the need to qualify the term 'Ministry'. By virtue of their internalisation of the institutional ethos, they assumed that their interlocutors would know what they meant by the Ministry. The Ministry for them was not merely a trope, but had a very substantial presence affecting their routine professional engagements. As for the authority structure at the NIRD, the office of the Director General (DG) embodies the powers of the Ministry *qua* the state. As, Dr Srivastava,<sup>5</sup> the senior most faculty member due to retire soon, says:

The Ministry is supreme even though the NIRD is theoretically autonomous. In effective terms, NIRD is largely Ministry-driven. The DG is the undisputed boss: he assigns research tasks to individual faculty members, places newly recruited members in different centres [departments] and asks them to develop expertise in the areas understaffed at the Institute. In real sense, the faculty notwithstanding various committees such as academic planning committees, research committees constituted of senior faculty members do not enjoy much autonomy.

Effectively speaking, the DG exercises more powers than generally vested in any executive head of a research organisation. The DG's powers, in great measure, emanate from his being a senior Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer. This has, wittingly or unwittingly, created a deep resentment against the bureaucratic supremacy among the votaries of academic autonomy at the NIRD. As Dr Fernandes put it bluntly, 'NIRD is theoretically autonomous though the word of mouth of an Under Secretary in the Ministry or a career bureaucrat will have more weightage than the senior most faculty member.'

Many other faculty members expressed similar sentiments. Dr Ramchandran, a faculty member having worked at the NIRD for more than 25 years, puts this in perspective:

NIRD has both excellent infrastructure and excellent faculty. The only stumbling block is the all-pervasive red-tapism. The faculty have to undergo a lot of bureaucratic hassles, they, in fact, have to do things which should have ideally been done by the administration and the support staff. For example, training programmes drain out their intellectual energy as they have to perform many administrative chores associated with such programmes. This practically means that they get less time for research [ ] NIRD's autonomy exists only on paper. It does whatever the Ministry asks it to do. And, that is why these two IAS officers are posted here as the

DG and DDG The Registrar and Director of Administration is also very often an IAS officer

A powerful, though subterranean, current against the disproportionate powers and privileges of the DG runs through the institutional veins of NIRD. The tussle concerning the relative supremacy of the bureaucrats of the Ministry vis-à-vis the academics working at the NIRD is an old issue. It has haunted the Institute ever since its inception. According to Dr Jena, who has seen the NIRD grow for over last three decades,

In the 1970s, the faculty strength was less. The infrastructure was quite poor compared with contemporary standards but the quality of research was appreciably high. The faculty in terms of research enjoyed more autonomy. The Ministry would not interfere much as they did not have many programmes. Autonomy was highly valued and guarded against erosion. Now even the professors behave as if they were bureaucrats. Autonomy has considerably eroded. Criticality and independence of mind are no longer valued and appreciated. They will try to sabotage your career chances if you become fiercely independent, they can say that your training programmes are not effective.

Even now, despite the NIRD having been made an autonomous organisation of the Ministry way back in 1965, the issue refuses to die down. Dr Madhvi, a newly recruited faculty member, echoes this sentiment when she says

NIRD is a hierarchical bureaucratic organisation. Till recently [2002], you had designations like Directors, Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors. Administration, represented by the DG, the DDG and the Registrar [all IAS officers], decides who should be doing what research, which centre will be assigned what areas of research, or what policy component. It also assigns individual faculty to respective centres, that too not always on the basis of training or background of the recruits concerned. Whether a particular centre [within the Institute] is understaffed is an important consideration in the placement of the newly recruited faculty members.

The fact that, apart from the DG, two other top-ranking administrative posts—that of the Deputy Director General, and the Registrar and Director of Administration—also belong to the IAS, further aggravates the resentment against the bureaucratic control. In these three IAS officers all administrative power is vested. Moreover, they are the ones who have direct interface with the Ministry. Often, they come to the

NIRD on deputation from the Ministry. That is why, they are seen more as members of the rural development bureaucracy than as academic leaders. Many faculty members feel that their presence at the Institute has led to the devaluation of social scientific research. According to these scholar-practitioners, the rural development bureaucracy has no respect for social scientists. Dr Sagar caustically remarked, 'Bureaucrats are the best policy makers, social scientists and development professionals!'

There was a time, however, when reputed social scientists like S C Dube used to head the Institute. One gets a feeling that, had the administrators come from the ranks of the academics themselves, the widely prevalent resentment against the steady erosion of institutional autonomy would have been less acute. In fact, many scholar-practitioners regaled the author with stories of fierce independence and courage of conviction showed by some former faculty members. Dr Gowda narrated how Professor Lalit K. Sen would never refrain from locking horns with the then DG even when it cost him an extension of service at the Institute.

Similarly, Dr Shivaraman delighted in narrating many anecdotes about Professor Sheshadri of the Centre for Panchayati Raj. Like Professor Sen, Professor Sheshadri's quest for academic autonomy made him cut short his career at the NIRD and go to a university. According to the institutional folklore, he got furious with the then DG when he was asked to sign an indent for the use of Institute's vehicle. Dr Kumar added, 'some of these professors were intellectual giants. They would find it below their dignity to cosy up to the DG or the DDG. Sadly enough, these days our Directors [professors] themselves behave as mini-versions of the DG.'

This is not to say that all the scholar-practitioners resent the presence of IAS officers amidst them. Some of them not only approved of their being there, but also spoke in celebratory terms about how an IAS officer as the head of the Institute was an asset in disguise. Dr Murthy was candid in this regard. 'You see our DG is very often a secretary-level IAS officer. That is why, even the rural development secretary listens to his advice. If the DG is convinced of some programmes and projects then it is very unlikely that the Ministry will shoot it down.' They were particularly appreciative of the influence and 'weight' that their DG carries in the corridors of power in Delhi. The 'weight' of the DG necessarily facilitates speedy processing of research projects and consultancy assignments. Most important, it ensures the



smooth flow of funds to the NIRD from the Ministry Dr Bhaskar euphorically remarked

NIRD provides right kind of research environment and requisite resources Through the good offices of DG, who is a secretary level IAS officer, you can clinch major research projects not only from the Ministry but also from various other multilateral international organisations like ADB, World Bank, WHO, UNDP etc Similarly, the DG can influence agencies like NABARD and many other development-related ministries to approach NIRD for consultancy projects or research studies

Dr Karunakaran found nothing wrong either in the Ministry's interference or the DG's overarching powers For him, 'NIRD is the eye of the Ministry. But for the Ministry, NIRD would not have attained the status of the centre for excellence in rural development' Interestingly, Dr Karunakaran's is not the lone voice. Many scholar-practitioners take special pride in theirs being a 'Ministry-sponsored Institute' They not only derive benefits from the NIRD's special proximity with the state, but also prefer designations of Directors, Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors to Professors, Associate Professors and Assistant Professors Naturally, they are the ones who would not complain about the loss of academic autonomy

Some other faculty members, though in a minority, were largely indifferent to the issue of institutional autonomy for the NIRD They did not think that bureaucratic interference should be made out as an issue at all. Dr Rao seemed to be the representative voice of this group 'After all, NIRD is a government institute So, unlike NGOs or the universities, it does not have the freedom to say no to the Ministry' Dr Malthi dismissed the issue of the loss of academic autonomy by saying that 'though IAS officers are there, senior faculty members take all the major policy decisions'

Based on their responses concerning the relationship between the Ministry and the NIRD, we can classify our scholar-practitioners into three categories the ones who feel that the autonomy of the NIRD is a sham, notwithstanding its formal autonomous status as an organisation, the ones who see virtue in its not being really autonomous, and the ones who are indifferent to the issue of autonomy Those belonging to the first category have complaints not only against bureaucrats wielding enormous powers over the Institute, but also against the members of their own rank, whom they see as active collaborators with the bureaucratic establishment In this sense, their criticisms are both outwardly and inwardly directed Those in the second category candidly admit the

benefits of NIRD's proximity with the rural development bureaucracy. In fact, some of them have made high-profile careers in the field of rural development, thanks to their location in the NIRD. For those in the last category, working at the NIRD is as good as working in any government department. They seem to be particularly happy that the facilities at the NIRD are a hundred times better than at conventional government research organisations or universities.

Thus, we find that, although most scholar-practitioners come from conventional social science disciplines, having spent considerable time at the universities (both as students/researchers and/or teachers/research workers) before coming to the NIRD, they do not share the same orientations towards the role of the state in social science research. In fact, our scholar-practitioners' institutional role as rural development professionals overshadows their self-image as trained social scientists. When we wanted to know their views about the possible meanings of the term 'rural', or how certain assumptions about the 'village' are embodied in rural development policies and programmes, most of them found such questions irrelevant, at times even meaningless, to the type of work they were expected to do or were engaged in. Most of them evaded the issue by taking refuge under the distinctive institutional mandate of NIRD. Dr Chandran, a sociologist by training, said unequivocally

We do not do much theoretical work like universities. For us, training is the main focus. Very often, we work within the mandate [given to us] of the NIRD. Also, we include in our research agenda the ongoing concerns of the Ministry [of Rural Development]. Infrequently, research ideas reflecting particular researcher's areas of interest are also concretised as research proposals, and supported by the Institute. It is here that one can pursue one's own individual theoretical interests. On the whole, we concentrate more on applied kind of research.

Dr Prasanna, a senior social anthropologist, found such questions outdated. He firmly placed these questions in the domain of village studies, and added, 'the days of village studies are gone, now sociology is yielding to political science which has captured the village in a big way in the name of Panchayati Raj institutions and decentralisation'. Dr Reddy remarked

In Andhra Pradesh revenue villages and the Panchayati Raj villages are almost the same. So, there is no real confusion as to the boundaries of a village. In this sense, what constitutes a village does not really pose itself as a real issue before those engaged in rural development research.

The complete normalisation of the village as a substantialised entity in rural development provided the essential thread in most of the responses that we got from our scholar-practitioners. From their response it was clear that, although most policies, plans, and programmes of rural development rely on certain conceptualisations (social scientific or commonsensical) of the village, the village itself is absent from their deliberations. Most of them agreed that an implicit model of the village certainly informs the strategy of rural development. However, they were clueless about how this takes place and in what ways notions about the village are instrumental in shaping rural development programmes.

Interestingly, not only explanations of rural development rely heavily on a stereotypical construction of the village, abstracted from the huge corpus of disparate social scientific literature, but also the local-level implementation of rural development programmes revolves around the village. This probably explains why the village as a concept has become so natural a part of the discourses of rural development and village studies. In any case, conceptualisations of the village, or the aspects of its construction as a natural entity for rural development, remained below the threshold of reflexivity for most of our scholar-practitioners.

Most of them had plenty to say on both why the village is the way it is, that is, underdeveloped or undeveloped, and how it can be developed. However, they had not much to share on what is that 'village' which is underdeveloped. Also, most of them looked at rural development as a technocratic solution to the national problem of poverty. Very few of them looked at development as the outcome of strategic political choices. Dr Vidyabhusan, though an economist by training, was acutely aware of the political dimensions of rural development. For him, 'politics is central to rural development. Much of the rural development programmes, in fact, can be seen as responses to the political pressures brought about by the bottom rungs of the social ladder.' Dr Sadasivan added another dimension to rural development. In his opinion, 'lobbies are central to rural development, both national and international lobbies'. Dr Sankaran amplified this by saying, 'globalisation has changed the meaning of rural development. Rural development has not remained the same over the years. When you talk of the politics of rural development, you cannot afford to ignore the impact of globalisation.'

It is not that all scholar-practitioners with whom we interacted found these questions outmoded. However, most of them did feel that the NIRD is not the right place to pursue such 'arcane' questions. A

university department of sociology and/or social anthropology would be the right place to do that Dr Subramaniam, an economist, suggested

It is difficult to read between the lines so far as rural development programmes are concerned. Still, more difficult is to get an idea of the village by working out the assumptions of such programmes. [T]he issue of what constitutes a village is quite complex. For example, in Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh, there are *falias*, and not villages which are separated socially and physically.

Some of them rightly pointed out that the notions of the village have not remained static since the heyday of the village monographs. According to Dr Naidu, the notions about the village have been guided by the 'spirit of the age'. There was a time when social anthropological studies trumpeted the unity and communitarian cohesiveness of the village. The post-colonial nation-state tried to give this idea a further push by launching massive community development programmes. Even today certain stereotyped ideas about the village have been translated into utopian experiments. Taking the case of Tamil Nadu, Dr Krishnan argued.

Though social justice villages in Tamil Nadu have been projected as model villages, they have not really succeeded. In contemporary policy environment, social cohesiveness is less important. There has been a shift in the orientation of rural development since the days of the CDP. These days programmes are more group-oriented. Indeed, target-group programmes are the mainstay of rural development planning and policy-making.

Ambiguities surrounding the idea of the village come to the fore in any discussion of rural development. We found that most of our scholar-practitioners (other than those who were sociologists/social anthropologists by training) preferred to talk of rural development than the village as such. But then, we found that there were as many views of rural development as there were scholar-practitioners. Dr Janardan, while acknowledging that rural development is a nebulous term, attempted to delimit its scope by saying that 'rural development refers to those programmes which are identified by the Ministry as such. Rural development is a blanket category and its scope is vast. However, we, at the NIRD, concern with only target-groups oriented programmes, that too mostly diagnostic or evaluation studies.' Dr Sinha virtually echoed the current official definition of rural development when he said, 'those

programmes which are meant for the rural poor are rural development programmes'

Ambiguities about rural development have implications for the type of research work that a faculty member can undertake at the NIRD. Dr Bhatt, a commerce graduate, was bitter that he could not undertake research on Tirpur textile industries in Tamil Nadu as the Institute, in its wisdom, decided that the said research did not fall within the purview of rural development. However, in another instance, he succeeded in convincing the Institute as to how a research project on Kolhapur footwear industry justifiably qualified as rural development research. He attributed his success on this front to the enormous amount of lobbying with the DG and the Research Planning Committee.

Not only research assignments but also the training programmes have to be justified as falling within the scope of rural development. This has posed problems to some faculty members having no real interest in rural development. However, once they joined the Institute they had to justify their professional existence on the basis of their contributions to rural development training and research. Most of such scholar-practitioners, however, internalised the institutional ethos and developed their areas of interest under the broad category of rural development. In many cases, they did not have much option to do that even. The DG decided their areas of interest and assigned them to the departments of his choice. For example, Dr Latika, a newly recruited faculty member having worked on the issue of displacement for her PhD in sociology of development, was attached to the Centre for Human Resources Development (CHRD) and was asked to undertake research concerning primary education, health, water and sanitation. Obviously, there is a lack of continuity between her prior research interest/experience and her current assignment. However, she did not complain, as she felt that the Institute has assigned her to an area that is understaffed.

In the same Centre we had Dr Banerjee, another senior scholar-practitioner, who has successfully evaded the 'burden' of rural development in his professional life. Trained as an anthropologist, his interests were mainly in medical anthropology. After having joined the NIRD, he started adding 'rural' as a prefix to his training programmes in the area of health. A certain amount of lobbying with the DG and the senior faculty members ensured that he did not have to deviate much from his earlier research interests in his career. Similarly, some other faculty members having an interest in sociology of education have been managing to stick to their original research interest by adding 'rural' to

their training programmes in the area of education. There are similar cases where particular faculty members have used the ambiguities surrounding rural development and have circumvented the institutional mandate to carry on with their areas of interest through lobbying with the DG and convincing him that the particular areas do fall within the ambit of rural development.

By contrast, we met Dr Dinakaran who saw no conflict between his earlier training/interest in psychology and his current location in a rural development institute. He has successfully organised training programmes on topics such as 'Attitudes and Behaviours of Primary Stakeholders in Rural Development', 'Gender Disparities and Attitudes and Behaviours of the Rural Society towards Girl Child'. There are many scholar-practitioners, like Dr Dinakaran, who do not see any problem in adjusting to their new research assignments. As Dr Tirthankar, a sociologist, said it laughingly, 'we can go and work in any kind of development-related institute as social component is required everywhere. So, where is the problem?'

A close look at the academic background/research training of the scholar-practitioners reveals that most of them did not have prior exposure in the area of rural development. True, after having joined the NIRD, most of them did successfully cultivate an interest in this area. However, there are some centres, for example, Centre for the Panchayat Raj (CPR) and Centre for Social Development (CSD), where one could find a good deal of continuity between scholar-practitioners' earlier research experience and their professional engagements at the Institute. No wonder, these centres are rated as the best within the NIRD.

Dr Rangachari of the CPR, who has done his Ph.D. from Kashi Vidyapeeth, Benares on the topic of emerging leadership in the rural areas, saw a positive relationship between one's prior research exposure to the area of rural studies and her/his potential for excellence at the NIRD. Dr Nachane (of the same Centre) opined, 'it helps in adjustment if there is some continuity between the faculty's earlier research interests and the assignments that he gets at the institute'. He told us how most of his colleagues, though political scientists, had done a considerable amount of research concerning rural political processes, voting behaviour in rural areas, and the villager's responses to the Panchayat Raj elections. Not surprisingly, his Centre has made valuable contributions to policy-making concerning democratic decentralisation and popular participation in water resources management. However, he placed the issue in a larger perspective.

NIRD has good facilities, but it all depends on individual's interests, drive and motivation. If someone has come here by accident, merely for the sake of a job, then naturally s/he is not going to excel. Some 10-15 percent of the faculty belong to this category. But that is true of any organisation. You go for a job because you have to run the family and not because you are interested in the job.

Dr Waghmare, his colleague in the Centre, did not agree with him on the issue of importance of earlier research exposure to rural studies. His training in public administration did not allow him to go for any distinctive identity for the rural. He said unresistingly that 'slums are rural Sir, rural means poor'. There were many scholar-practitioners who, like Dr Waghmare, had categorical personal opinions on what is rural, or what constitutes a village. But, when it came to reflexivity on such issues in their routine professional engagements, they would better leave it to the all-pervasive institutional wisdom of NIRD. For most of our scholar-practitioners, the burden of defining what rural development is is that of the Ministry, and the DG/DDG and the Research Programmes Committee of the Institute communicate it to them.

On the interface between social science research and the policy-making for rural development, our scholar-practitioners were more than willing to talk. Most of them had definite opinion on the types of work that they do at the NIRD, or the types of work that the NIRD is expected to do. Also, they had varied assessment of the value and significance of their work in relation to rural development. For most of them, the NIRD is mainly concerned with the training of rural development functionaries. In this sense, the self-image of our scholar-practitioners is that of rural development professionals/trainers than social scientists/researchers. Training programmes for the rural development functionaries is the mainstay of NIRD, 'course participant' is the most familiar term out there. Any stranger on the campus is taken to be a participant in one of the training programmes that run concurrently at the NIRD at any point of time. The entire institutional set-up at the NIRD is geared towards these training programmes.

The author's participation in two such training programmes offered interesting insights. Most of these training programmes have the same standard format, whatever is the theme. It should be remembered that organising such programmes is not a voluntary option for faculty members. Every faculty member has to organise at least two training programmes in a given financial year. So, faculty members are immensely preoccupied with these programmes. They have to advertise these programmes widely to ensure minimum number of participants. Under

the burden of successful organisation of training programmes, often they have to compromise on the quality of course participants. For example, although the NIRD claims that it imparts training only to district level rural development functionaries, this is not always the case, as is evident if one scrutinises the list of participants of a given training programme. Dr Vijaya justified this by saying, 'of course, secretaries from the Ministry will not come to the NIRD for training. Also, IAS officers at the district level would find it below their dignity to come here. Mostly, state government functionaries working at the district and other subsidiary levels come here for training.' She put the record straight by adding that some IAS officers, at times senior ones, also come to the NIRD to undergo training programmes.

There were few scholar-practitioners who believed that NIRD encouraged field-based empirical work not only for the sake of in-house training programmes, but also with a view to influence rural development policies directly. The NIRD's role in the Panchayati Raj legislations (73rd Constitutional Amendment) and its formulation of guidelines concerning participatory watershed management were frequently mentioned as instances of successful policy-making. In particular, the faculty members of CPR never got tired of mentioning how their then Director, Professor B. Shiviah, was invited for a breakfast meeting by the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that culminated in the NIRD playing a vital role in drafting the Panchayati Raj legislation.

Dr Rajaraman felt that, though the NIRD does not have enough to boast so far as its impact on the policy-making at the central level is concerned, many state governments have greatly benefited from the expertise available at the Institute. He further explicated:

State has to be seen at different levels such as centre, state and the panchayati raj. It is not that state at the central level only is engaged in policy-making. State level has its own mechanisms of policy-making. So, an attempt to differentiate different levels of policy-making is crucial for any assessment of the relationship between state and the social sciences. This will also help you better appreciate the role that NIRD has played in the policy-making over the years.

Still, there were many faculty members who felt that not much of the work done here directly influences policy decisions concerning rural development. For Dr Jaychandran, 'doing policy-oriented research does not necessarily translate into any direct role in policy-making. Different policy-makers and agencies approach the NIRD for different types of inputs. It is up to them to use these inputs the way they deem fit.' On the



other hand, Dr Chaube was quite clear about the NIRD's role in policy-making 'The Ministry gives policies Either they ask you for inputs on a particular ongoing programme, or in the broad existing policy area you can come up with research projects that the Ministry will finance '

Before assessing the role of NIRD in terms of its research contributions to policy-making, it is imperative to understand the types of research carried out there Also, we would do better to know the mechanisms through which research assignments are chosen and then distributed across the faculty On this, we could aptly quote Dr Navlakha

There are mainly two mechanisms to assign the research tasks to particular centres/faculty member In many cases some joint secretary in the Ministry writes to the DG, and the DG marks it to the relevant centre/faculty We can call this 'top-down approach' of research assignments Also, there is 'bottom-up approach' where a particular centre or the faculty member proposes certain research proposals along with other academic plans such as the number of training programmes, workshops, seminars etc Generally, such proposals are invited once in a given financial year The Institute's academic committee deliberates on them, and if found suitable, accords approval and financial sanction

Dr Joshi clarified it further

Though individual faculty members have the freedom to undertake research in their respective fields of specialisation, they should see to it that their research interests fall within the purview of the mandate of the Institute In any case, they have to take prior approval or concurrence of the NIRD before undertaking any research assignment

It was a repeated observation among the scholar-practitioners that the NIRD provides limited scope for individual research, though, in theory, faculty members can come up with their own research themes Nonetheless, they have positive appreciation of the type of research that they do Many of them underlined how the NIRD has pioneered several innovative rural development programmes As Dr Jain remarked, 'In fact, many rural development programmes have resulted from the research studies of the NIRD faculty One can mention programmes like Jawahar Rojgar Yojana (JRY), Swarna Jayanti Grameen Rojgar Yojna (SJGRY) ' Many other faculty members stated that the government guidelines for various rural development programmes heavily draw on the NIRD research studies Similarly, the faculty members belonging to the Centre for Rural Industries and Employment (CRIE) took credit for

designing many pilot programmes concerning wage labour. They felt that they were the leaders in arguing the case for a shift from the programmes based on assets creation to those based on wage labour in both cash and kind. Dr Vénkaih's was, however, a sober voice when he qualified his colleagues' statements by saying

Truly speaking, the Ministry does not accept all the recommendations that you might make based on your studies. You have to convince them and argue your case. At times, they accept your recommendations and suggestions *in toto*. At other times, your reports, recommendations and action points find their way to the dusty cupboards of the Ministry.

However, the NIRD faculty members were unequivocal in their belief that the researches conducted by them had been quite useful in identifying the gaps in the existing programmes, and in designing better programmes in the light of experience. According to Dr Jayanthan, many programmes, for example, the Training of Rural Youth for Self Employment, have emerged out of such rural development programmes-based research undertaken by the NIRD faculty. According to Dr Jacob, even a modest assessment of the research studies undertaken by the NIRD faculty convincingly demonstrates how they have identified major loopholes in the design and field-level implementation of rural development programmes. In fact, most of the faculty members had a penchant for narrating how her/his particular research study found out such and such gaps in the implementation of a given programme. They regale with such stories, which probably enhance their reputation as field-based experts.

A section of the scholar-practitioners felt that the findings of their research studies are not disseminated adequately. They thought only Ministry-sponsored, and that too programmes-linked, researches have had some impact on policy-making. Other research findings were kept in cold storage. Dr Goswami amplified this issue.

True, there are enough mechanisms in place for the regular interface between policy-making at the Ministry and the NIRD. Religiously, we submit copies of research highlights [annual publications of the NIRD containing some of the major research findings], recommendations of the seminars, and suggestions emanating out of the workshops held at the Institute. But not always researcher's findings find their way up. [A]nyway, one has to keep up the belief that your research is going to add to the policy enterprise, otherwise you will get disenchanted.

At the NIRD most of the faculty members publish in the in-house journals. This calls for an explanation as to the quality of research and the academic rigour of research publications. Whether in-house journals and other publication facilities promote and encourage publication of substandard research output is a moot question. Very few faculty members wanted to comment on this issue. Dr Gangaram was forthright in accepting that this type of 'incestuous' research publication served no good, either to the scholar-practitioner or to the Institute. Dr Seth said that the DG was aware that not all the in-house publications were of high quality. He fondly expressed the hope that something would be done to ensure the quality of NIRD publications at the highest level.

In a way, the closed character of the NIRD research is also linked to the general lack of a culture of critical appreciation among the faculty members. Some of the NIRD faculty were candid on this count. They frequently complained about their colleagues who seemed to have internalised the ethos that, being employees of a 'government organisation', they would not be criticising the government. A few of them also felt that the Ministerial presence through the offices of the DG and the DDG constrained them to tone down open criticisms of the government-sponsored rural development programmes. Some of them despaired at the very thought that the Ministry would ever listen to their recommendations. Dr Khan, while talking of the SJGRY, of which he has conducted evaluation studies in Uttaranchal, had this to say:

Most of the villagers covered under the SJGRY want cash wages and not food grains, as they can buy the better quality food grains from the market at roughly the same price. But the guidelines do not allow it. Obviously, the Ministry has other considerations in mind: what will happen to the tonnes of food grains stocked in the FCI godowns if food grains as wages are dispensed with? So the programmes, very often, are guided by what the Ministry thinks is important and appropriate, and not by what the villagers want or the researchers suggest. In this case, no one dare recommend money wages as the Ministry apparently thinks that the nutrition by way of food grains is more important than the cash for the villagers.

Often the discussion about the NIRD's research contributions would return to the commonly agreed upon belief that they were crucially important inputs to the training programmes. Very few of our scholar-practitioners would place this in the larger context of a general lack of a culture of critical appreciation. For those who could feel this constraint, the explanation laid in the all-powerful, though theoretically distant and invisible, control by the Ministry. As Dr Motwani remarked, 'independ-

dent thinking has declined even though the infrastructure facilities have improved NIRD, no doubt, has progressed a lot as an institute but to what extent it has achieved its own mission of contributing to rural development remains highly debatable ' Dr Motwani's scepticism finds its counterpart in Dr Bansal's bland assertion that 'NIRD is an excellent institution' He further adds, 'all faculty members have PhD, and all of them are doing good work Naturally, their work is influencing the policy-making exercises ' Dr Madhulika's is perhaps the most realistic assessment.

Critical approach towards development is completely lacking, as NIRD is a government institute Whatever comes from the Ministry is taken as given No questioning of the general wisdom of the Ministry is encouraged Of course, you will have number of studies pointing gaps in the existing corpus of rural development programmes Also, there will be equal number of studies suggesting alternative [rural development] programmes At the very least, these studies contain ways and means of plugging loopholes in the existing programmes After all, the ministry has to allocate a certain proportion of its budget to 'independent' research and evaluation studies of rural development policies and programmes No doubt, NIRD faculty are the major beneficiaries as most of these studies get assigned to them

The lack of a culture of internal debate and discussion notwithstanding, the NIRD has been a great source of distribution of academic patronage right through its initial years by way of the award of research projects and junior and senior research fellowships. Often, such patronage had been grossly misused, and the beneficiaries had come from universities and other research institutes It was an enviable case of an overflow of funds with few in-house takers, as the Institute itself was understaffed Now the distribution is almost intra-institutional in nature, as the growing number of the faculty has generated a greater reliance on the in-house expertise

Over the years the NIRD has witnessed a tremendous expansion, both in terms of physical infrastructure and human power Gone are the days when it was referred to as 'an old Tehsildar's office' No one can dispute the fact that the NIRD has successfully consolidated itself as a national-level rural development Institute After our initial round of interviews with the scholar-practitioners associated with the various centres of the NIRD, we gained the impression that its functionaries were a group of good people with good intentions, but with limited knowledge of what bureaucrats in the Ministry were doing. At times, we came across contradictory definitions of the objectives and contents of

their tasks. We also found the contradictory ways in which various faculty members expounded the institutional problems, or viewed the institutional mandate. Not surprisingly, some departments, sections or units did more work compared with others. This was, in fact, reflected in the self-image of such centres as CPR, CHRD, and CSD. However, few people really bothered about the meanings of the 'village'/'rural'. A recurring explanation elicited during the fieldwork was that the 'rural' was what the Ministry decided.

One does not fail to notice that the institutional logic at the NIRD was permeated by the desire to resolve rural development issues through the imposition of efficient institutional and technological support systems. What strikes one is the fact that most of the scholar-practitioners showed equally less concern about the politics of rural development, forget the semantics surrounding the idea of the village. For example, they fail to see that rural development need not always result in successful implementation of particular programmes. It could lead to the integration of the villagers into the national political system through a network of patron-client relationships, and possibly rural development policies might have been geared towards such *incorporationist* strategy. In this sense, the failure of rural development programmes could very well be because of the success of the strategy of political incorporation. Dr Batra, a political scientist by training, captured the essence of this criticism when he said

Sadly, my colleagues at the NIRD fail to understand that an independent and competent administration in the context of rural development is not simply a product of institution-building [establishment of institutes like the NIRD], or improved training expected of NIRD, but of politics. The neglect of power and politics at the NIRD results in an almost exclusive focus on commercialisation and technology as the main sources of rural change and portrays rural development as a unilinear process leading to a determinate outcome.

But then our scholar-practitioners would throw their hands in despair saying that they had no control over the politics of rural development, meaning that such issues did not fall under the purview of what they understood by rural development. What they understood by rural development was almost a *fait accompli* for them given their location in an Institute that has abstained from severing its umbilical chord from the Ministry.

### III Concluding Observations

The NIRD has historically accorded privileged reception to social sciences as evidenced in the background of its personnel. This is understandable as it was established at a time when social sciences were on the upswing and considered to be of great consequence to national planning and policy formulation. As an institute catering to the bureaucratic functionaries at different levels, the NIRD positioned social scientists as authentic guides and reliable field experts on development issues. That is to say, since the very beginning, the NIRD has attempted to create a distinctive self-image in relation to a bureaucracy that was thought to be largely oblivious of the grassroots realities given its systemic constraints. To what extent it has succeeded in this remains a moot issue. Also, the NIRD has consistently tried to distinguish itself from universities, and other 'ivory towers' of theoretical research. Being a centre of applied academic/policy research has been its unique selling point.

Furthermore, the NIRD has been very much a part of the Indian state and its ideology of rural development. It matters less that it was made an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Rural Development within almost a decade of its inception. The Ministry is writ large on the institutional landscape of NIRD. The statist ethos runs through the NIRD's capillaries and veins. No wonder, it has always looked towards the Ministry for its institutional sustenance and guidance. In fact, the NIRD is so obsessed with the Ministry that we did not come across even a single scholar-practitioner who would talk about the NIRD in relation to other institutes in the field of rural development. Evidently, the NIRD appears to be a self-contained institution without any compulsion or urge to establish its identity in relation to other institutions in the field of rural development. We would not be off the mark to claim that this institutional attitude has largely been an outcome of the state's generous support to the NIRD.

The state has had its own reasons to prop up the NIRD. It has benefited from the NIRD in many ways. For the Ministry, the NIRD has been the favoured destination of 'independent and critical' evaluation studies of its programmes and projects. In a way, the Ministry has needed the NIRD as much as the NIRD has needed the Ministry. Nonetheless, the relationship has not been based on an equal degree of mutual reciprocity. The balance has often been tilted in favour of the Ministry.

For the NIRD, rural development has been what the Ministry of Rural Development has periodically defined it to be. In this regard, it never looked askance at the Ministry. Even when the Institute's name was changed from NICD to NIRD, there was no debate as to the import of this change in nomenclature. None of the faculty members whom we interviewed threw much light on this. They did not seem to take it as an important turning point in the institutional history of NIRD, an annual report mentions this change in nomenclature in passing while giving the dates of the meetings in which this was done<sup>1</sup>.

Even today there seems to prevail a perfect institutional consensus over what constitutes rural development. What one has to bear in mind is that this institutional consensus was less an outcome of the internal deliberations than an external imposition from the Ministry. Our interviews with the scholar-practitioners testify to this observation. Although most of them happened to be social scientists, they have really not exhibited the critical faculties historically associated with the social sciences. There is another angle to this. For most of the NIRD faculty, the Institute has been no more than a work place. It is not that it was their interest in rural development that brought them to the NIRD. More often than not, they developed an interest in rural development simply because they happened to work at an institute of rural development.

As for the authority structure, the NIRD has carried the burden of bureaucratic inertia. For all practical purposes, it has functioned as a bureaucrats-led organisation. In fact, IAS directors are the norm, though for a brief period of its existence academics-directors have led it.

Most of the NIRD faculty thought of themselves as trainers and rural development professionals. They not only think of themselves as academics and scholars, but also project the self-image of policy-makers. At the NIRD one discerns a high degree of glorification of applied research. The scholar-practitioners contrasted the type of research that they do with the 'arcane theoretical research' done at the universities and other research institutes. The distinction between 'theoretical' and 'applied' research seems to be the defining feature for NIRD. One could sense certain inflation in the meaning of fieldwork or fieldwork-based research. We hardly came across any scholar-practitioner who did not regard herself/himself as a fieldworker. For our scholar-practitioners, even a day's visit to a village is adequate to call themselves fieldworkers<sup>1</sup>. This is indeed very different from Malinowski's exposition of fieldwork. No student of social anthropology would fail to notice this emptying of the content of fieldwork.

At the NIRD, scholar-practitioners seem to share a strong belief in the efficacy of technical solutions to the problems of rural development. As far as the politics of rural development is concerned, given an opportunity, they would wish it away. Moreover, they seem to have a conviction that any enterprise of rural development calls for appropriately trained manpower. In this sense, they share a distinctively professional 'top-down' approach towards rural development, despite their proclamations to the contrary. Although the NIRD never gets tired of talking about popular participation and decentralised development, it thinks its training programmes to be crucial for rural development.

In the ultimate analysis, the NIRD seems to have failed to create an 'epistemic community' of rural development professionals. Sure enough, the NIRD is only partly to be blamed for this failure, as rural development itself has been a promiscuous area of disciplinary specialisation. There have been too many stakeholders in the field of rural development to enable the NIRD to be a leader in the epistemological sense of the term. One does not know whether this failure is linked to its embeddedness in the direct regulatory framework of state.

## Notes

I thank Dr Koshy Tharakan and Ms Aparajita Gangopadhyay for their encouragement, the faculty members of NIRD for their generosity, time and patience, and the anonymous referee for her/his valuable suggestions on the earlier version of this article.

- 1 This paper is based on a chapter from my doctoral thesis in sociology submitted to Goa University.
- 2 Knowledge institutions refer to organisations 'usefully engaged in acquiring, creating, imparting and applying knowledge to address pressing needs of the society, and its value is determined by the quality and scale of its contribution in addressing social needs' (Shah 2000: 31).
- 3 This quotation of Nehru has been used as an epigraph in the first Annual Report of the Central Institute of Study and Research in Community Development (CISRCD) (1958-59).
- 4 Though the first Annual Report was published under the name of the CISRCD, in this paper we have put all the annual reports under the rubric of NIRD. Also, in the bibliography, there is a single entry under 'NIRD' covering all the annual reports published from 1958-59 to 2002-03.
- 5 To protect the privacy of the scholar-practitioners, all the names used in this paper are pseudonyms. Any resemblance to the real persons is merely incidental.

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# **Whom does Empowerment Deliver? - A Study of Poverty Alleviation in Hooghly District, West Bengal**

***Kalyan Sankar Mandal***

*It is widely believed that empowerment of the poor enables them to benefit from anti-poverty interventions. This paper examines this view by comparing the outcomes of two anti-poverty programmes in Hooghly district of West Bengal under situations of the 'absence' and the 'presence' of empowerment. It delineates the dichotomous trend in the distribution of benefits from the anti-poverty programme under empowerment. Though, on an average, the less privileged poor got higher coverage under the empowered situation, distribution of benefits among the assisted poor was iniquitous. It was observed that for creating vote banks, panchayats distributed the assistance thinly among a large number of assistance seekers, particularly from the vulnerable section among the poor. At the same time, the logic of market resulted in greater benefit to the relatively privileged poor.*

## **Introduction**

The Green Revolution of the late 1960s contributed substantially to agricultural production, but it also aggravated disparities and unrest in rural areas. To remedy this situation, the 'growth-oriented strategy' of Green Revolution was replaced by 'growth-with-equity strategy' in the 1970s. Under this strategy, several ameliorative programmes were undertaken for the rural poor. These programmes targeted the selected sections of rural poor, metamorphosed and emerged, in the 1980s, as a comprehensive anti-poverty programme covering all the poor.

Studies suggest that anti-poverty programmes have not always been successful in reaching the poor (Guhan 1990, Rath 1990: 338-40). Often the non-poor misappropriate the assistance provided under these programmes. Programmes for the poor generally operate in a situation where the poor have very little say in the agencies implementing them, and the non-poor control these agencies. What could be the way out of such a situation? Obviously, one source of power is property, but the poor lack that. There could be an alternative source of power for the poor, which is empowering the poor by organising them. Arguments on these lines have been made time

and again. For instance, the Report of the Working Group on Block Level Planning observed that ‘ unless there is conscious and deliberate effort to develop organisations of the poor, the whole exercise of growth with social justice becomes a mere platitude’ (Government of India [GOI] 1978 : 55) Arguing on similar lines, Anuradha Joshi and M Moore observe

There is a generic problem in anti-poverty interventions. The intended recipients—the poor—tend to be politically weak, in the broad sense of the term, in relation to public agencies and the non-poor. Anti-poverty intervention in poor countries will tend to work better if intended recipients can increase their influence over the implementation stage through collective action of various kinds (1999 : 2)

In brief, the suggestion has been that mobilising the poor for collective action would facilitate better implementation of the anti-poverty programmes. Of late, these types of arguments have given way to a broader concept of ‘empowerment’. While empowerment ‘means different things to different persons’ (Béteille 1999 : 589), some of its important aspects may be identified as follows

- 1 Empowerment primarily seeks to change society through a rearrangement of power (*Ibid* : 591)
- 2 Empowerment is a process whereby people acquire more influence over factors that shape their lives. The concept tends to be primarily applied for disadvantaged groups of people, and is usually linked to a vision of more equal living conditions in the society (Dale 2000 : 162)
- 3 Empowerment involves strengthening the capacity of poor by organising them into informal groups and formal associations and promoting their participation (Mohanty 2001 : 27)

Based on these aspects, we may delineate the following *attributes* of empowerment and their *manifestations*, for probing its impact on poverty alleviation

- 1 *Attribute* Reorganisation of power in favour of the poor  
*Manifestation* Landholding being a major source of power in rural India, land reforms aiming at redistribution of land, and reforming land tenure system in favour of the rural poor
- 2 *Attribute* Decentralisation of state power, self-governance and effective participation of the people  
*Manifestation* The process of strengthening the panchayati raj system, and devolution of power to the people
- 3 *Attribute* Formal or informal organisation for mobilisation of the people  
*Manifestation* Mobilisation of the poor by political or non-party formations

The common aspect of all these attributes is that they are concerned with the disadvantaged sections of the people and aim at improving their conditions, thereby promoting equal living conditions in the society

This paper examines how the above attributes of empowerment, manifested through types of measures indicated, influence poverty alleviation<sup>1</sup> It is based on a study undertaken in West Bengal, where, in 1977, a Left Front government led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI (M)] came to power This government has become the longest-ruling democratically elected Communist government in world history, and it provides a unique example of a sustained effort at empowering the rural poor

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows Section II gives an idea of the study set-up Section III presents an account of the shaping of anti-poverty programme before the reforms empowering the poor were initiated in West Bengal Section IV gives an account of the measures undertaken to empower the poor. To comprehend the impact of empowerment, Section V undertakes a comparative analysis of the households assisted under the anti-poverty programmes in the 'empowered' and the 'non-empowered' situations It also examines the nature of income generation from the anti-poverty programme under the empowered situation Section VI explains the findings, and Section VII makes some concluding observations

## II

### The Study Set-up

A comparative analysis of the outcomes of anti-poverty programmes under the empowered and the non-empowered situations would give us an idea of the impact of empowerment on poverty alleviation Such an experimental situation is often difficult to get However, the author has conducted two empirical studies of poverty alleviation programmes, which, taken together, represent a situation close to such an experimental design Below we describe this situation

The pioneering attempt at alleviating rural poverty in India was made by the Small Farmers' Development Agency (hereafter SFDA) programme This programme, meant for small farmers, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers<sup>2</sup>—the main sections of the rural poor, was introduced in 1971, in some selected districts throughout the country, as a pilot project By 1979, the programme was in operation in 168 districts covering 1,818 blocks On 2 October 1979, the SFDA programme was merged with the Integrated Rural Development Programme (hereafter IRDP), when all community development blocks were brought under the IRDP The IRDP's target group mainly consisted of small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers and rural artisans The pattern of subsidy was 25 percent for small farmers, 33 33

percent for marginal farmers, agricultural labourers and rural artisans, and 50 percent for scheduled castes/tribes and physically handicapped persons among them (GOI 1998 Sec 2 1 7) The subsidy given under the IRDP was similar to that of the SFDA programme However, being extended to cover the non-agricultural poor, the criterion for identifying the poor changed from landholding to income The households having income below a defined poverty-line became the clientele of the IRDP<sup>3</sup> Basically, both SFDA and IRDP sought to generate additional income among their respective clientele through asset-endowment-by providing easy institutional credit, capital subsidies and support in terms of extension services etc Thus, the IRDP was considered as an extension and expansion of the SFDA programme (GOI 1981 Sec 11 4)<sup>4</sup>

The year 1977-78 was a watershed in West Bengal as far as rural reconstruction is concerned The Left Front government led by CPI (M) that came to power in the state in 1977 initiated various measures of rural reconstruction It revived the panchayats in West Bengal, originally initiated with the passing of West Bengal Panchayat Act in 1973 Various measures for empowering the poor followed All this coincided with replacing the SFDA programme by the IRDP The SFDA programme in West Bengal had operated in the absence of any 'empowerment' of the rural poor, whereas the IRDP operated under a relatively 'empowered' situation for them

As part of his doctoral work, the author conducted a study of the SFDA programme in Hooghly district of West Bengal during 1977-78 (see Mandal 1981) Though around that time a CPI (M)-led Left Front government had just come to power in the state, the data collected in this study pertained to the implementation of the programme during the pre-Left Front government period<sup>5</sup> The implementation of the SFDA and other rural development programmes (see Section III) was then mainly dependent on the administrators, there was no attempt at empowering the people Thus, the SFDA is an instance of implementation of anti-poverty programme in the absence of empowerment of the poor

Fourteen years after the SFDA study, the author conducted a study of the IRDP in Hooghly district using the data frame of the SFDA study (see Mandal 1995) These fourteen years also happen to be the period of Left Front rule in West Bengal, during which a series of reforms empowering the poor were undertaken in the rural areas of the state Thus, our IRDP study represents an instance of the implementation of anti-poverty programme under the empowered situation for the poor Taken together, these studies capture a unique near-experimental situation to examine the impact of empowerment on poverty alleviation

### III

#### Anti-poverty Programme Under Non-Empowered Situation

When the SFDA programme was introduced, based on past experience, it was felt that, as the rich controlled local politics, it would be difficult to deliver assistance to the poor through such local institutions as panchayats. It was thought that the centrally sponsored development agencies (like the SFDA), de-linked from local panchayats, would be a better mechanism to deliver assistance to the poor. Thus, it became a programme primarily driven by an administrative arrangement, which also served the interest of the rich farmers. As an illustration, we shall discuss one administrative arrangement that played an important role in shaping the SFDA programme, namely, the implementation of anti-poverty programme through growth-oriented administrative arrangement.

District was the area of operation of the SFDA. However, apart from the monitoring office located at the district headquarters, the SFDA did not have a separate administrative machinery of its own. The project office at the district headquarters had to get its work done through the existing administrative set-up of the district, that is, the various developmental functionaries of the district. In this, the block development office, the base of the developmental administration in India, played the crucial role.

For understanding how messages about the SFDA programme reached the villagers and how the programme implementation was initiated, it is important to look into the operation of the agricultural extension of the developmental blocks. In most parts of the country, the agricultural extension service of the developmental blocks was rendered through the Training and Visit (T&V) system proposed by the World Bank (Benor and Harrison 1977) for faster introduction of modern technology. The key concept of the T&V system of extension was the 'imitable contact farmers', according to which 'The message of the extension service should be focussed mainly on selected contact farmers who will assist in spreading the new practice to most farmers in the area quickly' (*Ibid* 14). The Village Level Worker (VLW) (the key grass roots level official of the block administration) selected such farmers as 'contact farmers' who could easily accept new methods. This required the selected farmers to be able to promptly meet the requirements of the new practice, and be able to take the risk of trying a new agricultural practice. Both of these presumed the economic soundness of the farmer. Thus, invariably the 'contact farmers' of the T&V system were better off farmers. Usually they were also the influential farmers of the locality. The VLWs found it prudent to keep them pleased. Often they were the farmers through whom modern technology was propagated in the 1960s to increase agricultural production. Though in the 1970s the emphasis changed from 'growth'

to 'growth-with-equity' and programmes like the SFDA were introduced, the same system of extension service was continued. As a result, the information about the SFDA programme reached the 'contact farmers', who usually were the better off farmers and not the farmers for whom a pro-poor programme like the SFDA was meant. Thus, the assumption that a centrally sponsored programme, operating from the district level, de-linked from local political institutions would be able to deliver assistance to the poor, bypassing the rich, did not work. This resulted in many non-poor appropriating the assistance meant for the poor. This was a situation devoid of any attempt at empowering the poor.

#### IV

#### **Measures of Empowerment Supporting the IRDP**

The main thrust of the IRDP was to undertake appropriate developmental activities for its area of operation (a district) to ensure that the identified poverty groups are benefited. For implementation of the IRDP, like the SFDA, a District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) was set up. This body was supposed to ensure that the poor benefit from the developmental activities undertaken in the district. Though the IRDP was an anti-poverty programme similar to the SFDA, its implementation mechanism, particularly in West Bengal, was very different from the SFDA and also from the IRDP in other states, in that it was backed by the sustained effort by the Left Front government to empower the poor.

After coming to power in 1977, the Left Front government undertook significant reform programmes in rural Bengal. The most important of these was the successful implementation of land reforms, including the redistribution of land held over the legal ceiling to the poor, legislation for higher crop-shares, and security of tenures of sharecroppers. For effective implementation of tenancy legislation, a campaign (Operation Barga) was launched for the registration of existing tenant leases (Gazdar and Sengupta 1999: 55).

Second, the Left Front government felt that the panchayati raj system, advocated by the central government and introduced in West Bengal, would provide a vehicle through which the poor could be empowered. Accordingly, the panchayats were reorganised, the existing four tiers of panchayats were reduced to three: Gram Panchayat, at the village level; Anchal Panchayat, at the block level; and Zila Parishad, at the district level. Arrangements were made for direct elections by secret ballot for all the three levels of panchayats at five years interval (Webster 1992: 135). Consequent upon its success in the 1977 state assembly elections, the Left Front received a clear victory at

all three levels of the panchayats in the 1978 panchayat elections, and has retained its hold on the panchayats in the state

Third, the Left Front government undertook the arduous task of changing the relationship between administrators and elected representatives of panchayats. Prior to 1978, the Block Development Officer (BDO) had the main responsibility in the block administration, the VLW played crucial role in his area of operation and reported to the block office, and the District Magistrate (DM) had the main authority with particular responsibilities delegated to other officers at the district level. After 1978, these officers were required to work alongside the elected representatives of the panchayats. The BDO and the DM were made ex-officio members of the Panchayat Samiti and the Zila Parishad, respectively. They, along with other officers, were expected to implement the resolutions passed by the panchayats (*Ibid* 137). Thus, after 1978, the centre of power in developmental administration of the district moved from government officials to elected representatives of the panchayats, in place of VLWs, BDOs and DMs, the elected members of panchayats at the village, block and district levels started playing the crucial role.

Fourth, to empower the people, the Left Front government introduced a system of 'bottom-up planning'. According to the decentralised system of planning, introduced since 1985, those sections of Annual State Plan concerned with rural development are formulated at the local level. Each Gram Panchayat is required to first prepare a statement of the pressing needs of its area. These are then passed on to the Panchayat Samitis at the block level, where, based on those statements, the departmental officers of the block prepare schemes and programmes. The consolidated plans are then forwarded to the Zila Parishad, where they are finalised through further consultation with the representatives of the Panchayat Samitis to prepare the Annual District Plan (Webster 1989 41-42).

In West Bengal, all rural development work, inclusive of the IRDP, are carried out through the panchayat. The panchayat prepares the plan of action of the schemes and executes it. In all these schemes, the members of panchayat select the beneficiaries. The Sabhadipati (Chairperson) of the Zila Parishad (the district level panchayat tier) is the Chairperson of the DRDA and the District Planning Committee. Similarly, the Sabhadipati of the Panchayat Samiti (the block level panchayat tier) is the Chairperson of the IRDP Sub-Committee at the block level. Thus, the panchayat institutions are the policy makers and executors of IRDP and other schemes at the local level (*Ibid* . 43).

Finally, it is important to note that the pro-poor reforms mentioned above were undertaken in the backdrop of increased political mobilisation of the rural poor by the All India Kisan Sabha (the peasant wing of the CPI



[M]) It is reported that, during 1977-83, there was a rapid expansion in the membership of the West Bengal unit of All India Kisan Sabha from four lakhs to fifty-two lakhs (Dasgupta 1984 A147)

In brief, the IRDP in West Bengal, over the years, got the benefit of structural reforms of the rural areas in terms of land reforms and mobilisation of the poor, which, in turn, helped the process of strengthening the panchayats and devolving power to the people. Thus, the implementation of IRDP was backed by a very substantive attempt at empowering the poor. In the following section, we will examine the impact of this empowerment of the poor on the implementation of anti-poverty programmes like the IRDP.

## V

### **Impact of Empowerment on Poverty Alleviation**

We have assumed that measures like land reforms, strengthening of panchayats, devolution of power to the people, and mobilisation of the people have contributed to the empowerment of the people, and this empowerment is likely to influence who gets how much assistance under the IRDP. Under the IRDP, the rural poor were identified and schemes were worked out for the households to be assisted. The assisted household was provided with a subsidy amount and a bank loan, as per the IRDP norm, to undertake the identified income generating activity. Not all the identified poor got assistance from the IRDP. In fact, only a small section of the identified poor was covered under the IRDP. Our assumption is that ultimately who got selected to be assisted under the IRDP depended upon the socioeconomic background of the household. We have assumed that empowerment of the poor, through various measures discussed in the earlier section, operated as the intervening variable and influenced the process of getting selected as beneficiaries of the IRDP.

In this section, we have analysed the impact of empowerment on benefit distribution from anti-poverty programmes through a two-stage analysis. First, we probed, if empowerment has made any impact on who got assisted under the anti-poverty programmes? That is, is there any difference in the socioeconomic status of those who got assisted under empowered and non-empowered situations? Second, we examined, who got how much income out of the assistance under the empowered situation. Thus, what follows is an examination of (1) change in socioeconomic status of the households assisted under anti-poverty programmes due to empowerment, and (2) socioeconomic status and the nature of income generation among the households assisted under the IRDP.

### **Change in Socioeconomic Status of the Assisted Households**

We have undertaken a comparative analysis of the socioeconomic status of the households assisted under the SFDA and the IRDP. These two comparable sets of data present the socioeconomic background of the households assisted under anti-poverty programmes under two different situations in the 'absence' (the SFDA data) and the 'presence' (the IRDP data) of empowerment in West Bengal. This comparison captures the impact of empowerment on poverty alleviation.

Not everybody entitled to get assistance under anti-poverty programmes gets assistance.<sup>6</sup> We have assumed that the chance of getting assistance is largely influenced by the socioeconomic status of the household. In our SFDA and IRDP studies, we have included caste, land holding, family type, family size, education and occupational status of the household as indicators of socioeconomic status of the household.<sup>7</sup> Table 1 presents the socioeconomic status of the households assisted under anti-poverty programmes under non-empowered and empowered situations, as reflected in the SFDA and the IRDP data, respectively. It is seen that the lower-caste marginal farmers or agricultural labourer households, with small-size family and with lower educational and occupational status, improved their share most in getting assistance under the anti-poverty programme under the empowered situation. On the other hand, the dominant caste households, having more than two hectares of land, with large families and with higher and medium educational and occupational status lost most. Thus, under the empowered situation, the assistance under the anti-poverty programme has gone to the less privileged sections of the poor in greater number. This validates the widely held belief that empowerment enables the less privileged to benefit more from anti-poverty programmes. Our contention is that the greater coverage of the less privileged under the IRDP has been possible largely due to empowered position of the poor in West Bengal, which was lacking under the SFDA. How could one be sure that the greater coverage of the less privileged poor under the IRDP was due to their empowerment? What about the IRDP in other states, where the poor were not empowered as in West Bengal? Were IRDP-assisted households in other states in any way different from their counterparts in West Bengal? The answer follows.

Under the SFDA in Hooghly, the administrative officers were mainly responsible for identifying the beneficiaries and providing assistance to them. This resulted in large-scale appropriation of assistance by better off sections. A similar thing happened under the IRDP in states where the administrative officers played the key role in implementing the programme. The Programme Evaluation Organisation of the Planning Commission has recorded that funds under the poverty alleviation programmes like the IRDP

Table 1 Socioeconomic status of households assisted under anti-poverty programmes

Indicators of socioeconomic status	Households assisted under non-empowered situation (SFDA) (N = 83) (%)	Households assisted under empowered situation (IRDP) (N = 142) (%)	Change due to empowerment Gain (+)/Loss (-)
<i>Caste</i>			
Higher	22	20	-02
Dominant	59	34	-25
Lower	10	40	+30
Muslim	08	06	-02
<i>Landholding</i>			
Above 2 hectares	44	10	-34
1 1 to 2 hectares	26	16	-10
Up to 1 hectare	20	42	+22
Landless	09	32	+23
<i>Family type</i>			
Joint	41	39	-03
Nuclear	59	61	+03
<i>Family size</i>			
More than 10	35	15	-25
6 to 10	54	51	-03
Up to 5	11	34	+23
<i>Educational status</i>			
Higher	41	20	-21
Medium	53	29	-24
Lower	06	51	+45
<i>Occupational status</i>			
Higher	31	13	-18
Medium	57	34	-23
Lower	12	53	+41

have been least misused in West Bengal, where the beneficiaries were identified by the panchayats. In other states, where the administrative officials were mainly responsible for dispensing IRDP funds, there has been widespread misuse. This was not the fault of the officials *per se*, they do not have local information and they relied on *patwari* or some influential villagers (Ghosh 1988: 1510).

Here I wish to recall some encounters during my fieldwork. While collecting data for the SFDA study, I interacted with an agricultural labourer who, though eligible, did not get assistance under the SFDA. He had employment as an agricultural labourer at the most for six months a year when there is rain-fed cultivation. When he did not have any employment,

he did several things for survival, including gathering food from common property resources—like plucking edible green leaves, which grow in marshy land, or catching fish from ponds or other water bodies. He added,

sometimes I steal fruits or vegetables from some villager's garden. Sometimes I go to landlord's house and ask him to give me some work like fencing his garden or some other odd jobs. In return, I get something to eat and may be few rupees as wage. That is how I somehow survive in those days when I do not get any regular employment.

This was the situation when an anti-poverty programme like the SFDA was in operation, but was not backed by empowerment measures. The SFDA assistance in that village was given to better off farmers and to the exclusion of agricultural labourers. Has the situation changed in fourteen years since then, as anti-poverty programmes are now backed by empowerment measures? Do the poor villagers, like that agricultural labourer, still need to beg the landlord for work or steal from the neighbour's garden for survival? I do not have any direct answer to these questions. However, while collecting data for the IRDP study, I asked a villager, who was employed in the panchayat office and whom I found very informative, 'Could you tell me about any change you have noticed in the village due to the operation of IRDP?' After some thought, he said, 'One thing I can tell you, the incidents of theft have come down very much. Earlier, if anybody left any utensil (taken for washing) on the banks of the pond, in all likelihood that would get stolen. Now such incidents are rare.' Other villagers present there agreed.

Let me recall another such encounter that reflected the functioning of the SFDA in Hooghly. One day, when I was in the SFDA office at the district town of Chinsura, I met a marginal farmer who was visiting that office to follow up his application for assistance. He was a bit dissatisfied, as he could not meet the officer concerned. Pointing to the signboard of the SFDA office, he told me, 'You see the word "Small" written over there on the signboard should be replaced by the word "Big". That would give a more realistic picture about this office.'

While collecting data about the IRDP, I often probed the villagers and officials about whom do they think got assisted under the programme. What I gathered is as follows: one cannot complain much on the ground that the IRDP assistance was given to the non-poor at the exclusion of the poor. The complaint was that the assistance was given to the poor who were closer to the ruling party. That is, the main accusation was no longer about appropriation of the assistance by the non-poor, but about political patronage in the distribution of assistance among the poor.

Data presented in Table 1 and our field experience substantiates the point that, in comparison with the SFDA programme, relatively less privileged among the poor got assistance under the IRDP in our study area. We attribute this positive outcome of the anti-poverty programme as a contribution of the sustained effort at empowerment of the poor by the Left Front government.

Our story could have ended here on a positive note on the role of empowerment in enabling the poor to benefit from anti-poverty programmes. After all, this is what is widely believed. However, as we came across a lacuna of target-group-oriented programmes for the poor, we probed further. As the earlier development efforts had failed to benefit the poor, programmes specially designed to benefit them were introduced. Probably, out of concern with reaching the poor, emphasis was laid on delivering assistance to the target group, and it was naively assumed that just delivering assistance to the target group would automatically benefit them. Thus, 'the recipients of assistance' under the target-group-oriented programmes are commonly referred to as 'beneficiaries'. During the SFDA study, it dawned upon us that getting assistance does not necessarily mean benefiting from assistance. Getting assistance is only the first step, assistance becomes meaningful only when it enables the assisted households to get income. Accordingly, in the IRDP study we collected data on who got how much income due to assistance. These data, which we discuss next, reveal an interesting dimension of the impact of empowerment on the distribution of benefit from anti-poverty programmes.

### **Socioeconomic Status and the Nature of Income Generation**

In our IRDP study, data were collected on per annum income of the assisted households out of the IRDP schemes or activities. Based on their annual income from the IRDP as reported by the respondents, they were categorised into three groups: 'no income', 'income up to Rs 3,000', and 'income above Rs 3,000' (see Table 2). To some extent, at least, this categorisation took care of the inexact reporting of income by the respondents. Besides, the DRDA, Hooghly (1988) had brought out a handbook in Bengali entitled *Adarsha prokalpa* (Model scheme) detailing 118 projects to be undertaken with IRDP assistance. This handbook, prepared by the officials of the departments concerned and banks, gave details of raw materials, capital requirement, bank loan, subsidy, income, expenditure, loan repayment plans, etc., and was handy in probing the income data provided by the respondents. Obviously, to an extent, income depends on the scheme for which assistance

Table 2 Socioeconomic status and income from IRDP assistance under empowered situation

Indicators of socioeconomic status	No income (%)	Income increased up to Rs 3,000 (%)	Increased above Rs 3,000 (%)	Total N
<i>Caste</i>				
Higher	48	38	14	29
Dominant	23	35	42	48
Lower	37	35	28	57
Muslim	50	50	0	08
<i>Landholding</i>				
Above 2 hectares	27	33	40	15
1.1 to 2 hectares	17	31	52	23
Up to 1 hectare	39	41	20	59
Landless	42	36	22	45
<i>Family type</i>				
Joint	29	33	38	55
Nuclear	39	39	22	87
<i>Family size</i>				
More than 10	14	24	62	21
6 to 10	36	42	22	72
Up to 5	43	35	22	49
<i>Educational status</i>				
Higher	39	25	36	28
Medium	29	34	37	41
Lower	37	42	21	73
<i>Occupational status</i>				
Higher	11	33	56	18
Medium	36	31	33	48
Lower	41	41	18	76
Total	35	37	28	142

is provided, and the selection of scheme for an assisted household, to an extent, depended on the socioeconomic condition of that household. Significantly, 35 percent of the assisted households did not get any income out of assistance. That is, for more than one-third of the assisted households, the IRDP assistance was no more than a one-time dole.

Secondly, we observe that, the higher the socioeconomic status, the better the chance of getting income out of the IRDP assistance. The only exception to this is the 'higher' caste and 'higher' education households. In rural West Bengal, people belonging to 'higher' castes are in a disadvantageous position vis-à-vis the 'dominant' castes, and the 'lower'

castes (scheduled castes and tribes) get preferential treatment under anti-poverty programmes. Furthermore, most 'higher' caste households were also better-educated households. It is likely that these households lacked requisite skills to utilise the assistance received for the types of projects prescribed under the IRDP. Probably, they availed the assistance, as they could not get employment in spite of being educated. Also, being educated, they may not have been motivated to work for the IRDP schemes, regarding them to be below their dignity.

A significant finding emerges when we look at the data in Tables 1 and 2 together. In Table 1, we saw that, due to empowerment, relatively less privileged households of the poor could increase their representation in the IRDP assistance. The income generation data in Table 2 shows that it is the relatively privileged among them who could increase their income out of such assistance. The less privileged among the poor failed to gain much income out of assistance. Thus, the two dimensions of benefit distribution, namely, the number of households assisted and the amount of income increased, worked in opposite directions. Under the empowered situation, assistance has gone more in favour of relatively less privileged households, in terms of number of households assisted, whereas the amount of increase in income has favoured relatively privileged households among the poor. Hence, the increase in the percentage of less privileged households among those assisted should not be taken as an unalloyed gain for them. Nor should the relative decline in the percentage of higher socioeconomic status households be taken as an absolute indicator of their less benefit from anti-poverty programmes.

The apparent gain of the less privileged households from the IRDP under the empowered situation, which we observed in Table 1, is deceptive. Empowerment has changed the situation in favour of the less privileged only to a limited extent. Though empowerment enabled the less privileged poor to get assisted in greater number, it could not enable them to derive increased income out of such assistance. Empowerment enabled the less privileged poor to get assistance more in number than in substance, which still remained the prerogative of the relatively privileged poor. As such, empowerment has operated here more as a tokenism for the less privileged.

Similar dichotomous trends have been reported by other studies, too. For instance, Pranab Bardhan and Dilip Mookherjee (2004) examined poverty alleviation efforts of West Bengal panchayats during 1978-98, a period close to that of our study (1978-95), and concluded that anti-poverty interventions in West Bengal were, on the whole, well targeted, but, within the poor, the more vulnerable section got neglected and the relatively better off among the poor benefited. Incidentally, their report covered, besides the IRDP, other

poverty alleviation efforts like agricultural mini-kits distribution, employment programmes, the financial performance of the panchayats, and the land reforms programme undertaken by panchayats

In a different context, a somewhat similar point has been made for the Indian economy as a whole. After analysing the performance of Indian economy since 1980, R. Nagaraj concludes, 'It has been a period of growth with inequality'. He then observes, 'Interestingly, such an inequalising process of economic growth has occurred at a time when there is a distinct diffusion of political power towards the erstwhile-disenfranchised classes and castes, which broadly represent those left behind in economic development' (2000: 2838). That is, what we have found in our micro-level study is endorsed by Nagaraj's macro-level analysis that, despite empowerment, the poor were unable to duly benefit from the process of development. In the following section, we shall examine the reasons for the limited achievement of empowerment.

## VI

### Limited Achievement of Empowerment: An Explanation

Empowerment of the poor was suggested as a way out of the failure of anti-poverty programmes to deliver assistance to the poor. However, we have found that, though, on an average, the anti-poverty programme was better targeted under the empowered situation, the distribution of benefits among the assisted poor remained inequitous. Let us first look at our data for the probable reasons for this.

One factor influencing income out of assistance could be the amount of assistance one got under the IRDP. The IRDP assistance has a component each of government subsidy and institutional credit. On an average, subsidy-to-credit ratio is 1:2. These together represent the project cost, which we have taken as the assistance amount. Table 3 presents the distribution of assisted households in terms of the amount of assistance.

Under the IRDP, problems of the poor households were assessed and, based on that assessment, an appropriate scheme was suggested to enable a household to increase its income. In allocating assistance to the target group, the prescribed guideline of the IRDP was the dictum of *anttyodaya*, the principle of 'putting the last first'. However, Table 3 suggests that a diametrically opposite policy was practiced in allocating assistance even under the empowered situation. The distribution of assistance amount among the households corresponded to their socioeconomic status: the lower status households received lesser assistance, while the higher status households



Table 3 Socioeconomic status of the assisted households and the amount of assistance received by them

Indicators of socioeconomic status	Assistance up to Rs 5,000 (N = 80) (%)	Assistance above Rs 5,000 (N = 62) (%)	Assisted households (N = 142) (%)
<i>Caste</i>			
Higher	21	19	20
Dominant	27	44	34
Lower	44	35	40
Muslim	08	02	06
	$X^2 = 6.9$ df = 3 P < .05		
<i>Landholding</i>			
Above 2 hectares	05	18	10
1.1 to 2 hectares	05	31	16
Up to 1 hectare	51	29	42
Landless	39	22	32
	$X^2 = 27.145$ df = 3 P < .001		
<i>Family type</i>			
Joint	25	56	39
Nuclear	75	44	61
	$X^2 = 14.557$ df = 1 P < .001		
<i>Family size</i>			
More than 10	05	28	15
6 to 10	49	53	51
Up to 5	46	19	34
	$X^2 = 19.329$ df = 2 P < .001		
<i>Educational status</i>			
Higher	11	31	20
Medium	25	34	29
Lower	64	35	51
	$X^2 = 14.555$ df = 2 P < .001		
<i>Occupational status</i>			
Higher	02	26	13
Medium	29	40	34
Lower	69	34	53
	$X^2 = 24.289$ df = 2 P < .001		

received higher assistance. Chi-square test showed this trend to be statistically significant.

When we look at this finding in conjunction with the findings of Table 2, the implication becomes clear. In Table 2, we have seen that income from

the IRDP assistance accrued in accordance with socioeconomic status of the household. This was so, Table 3 suggests that, because the assistance amount was distributed corresponding to the socioeconomic status of the households. In other words, income accrued in accordance with the assistance provided under the IRDP. This is confirmed by Table 4, which shows that a lesser assistance amount is likely to generate less or no income, whereas a higher assistance amount is more likely to enable a household to have higher income. The association between assistance amount and income generation is found to be statistically significant. Thus, putting the findings of Table 2, 3 and 4 together, we may conclude that the IRDP assistance was distributed corresponding to the assisted households' socioeconomic status, and income followed accordingly. In other words, relatively privileged among the poor got higher assistance even under the empowered situation, and they derived higher income out of such assistance.

Table 4 Distribution of assisted households in terms of the amount of assistance received and income generated under IRDP

Amount of assistance received	Income generated from assistance (per annum)			Total N
	No income %	Income up to Rs 3,000 %	Income above Rs 3,000 %	
Up to Rs 5,000	44	40	16	80
Above Rs 5,000	24	32	44	62
Total	35	37	28	142
$\chi^2 = 13.604$ $df = 2$ $P < .001$				

We must keep in mind that we are talking of a situation where the poor presumably have been empowered through very extensive pro-poor reforms. Thus, the finding that even under the empowered situation the relatively less privileged section among the poor got less assistance and less income seems little surprising, as empowerment is meant for the disadvantaged. A probable explanation for this may be found in the following observations of Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen:

The extent of economic distress experienced by different individuals is, to a great extent, a matter of common knowledge within a given rural community. An apparent solution to the selection problem would take the form of making the selection process rely on local institutions to allocate public support according to individual needs.

Would this method work in practice? The leaders of a village community undoubtedly have a lot of information relevant for appropriate selection. In

addition to the informational issue, there is also the question as to whether the community leaders have strong enough motivation—or incentives—to give adequately preferential treatment to vulnerable groups. Much will undoubtedly depend on the nature and functioning of political institutions at the local level and in particular on the power that the poor and the deprived have in the rural community. Where the poor are also powerless—as is frequently the case—the reliance on local institutions to allocate relief is problematic, and can end up being at best indiscriminate and at worst blatantly iniquitous, as numerous observers have noted in diverse countries (quoted in Bardhan and Mookherjee 2004: 965).

This observation has been validated by Bardhan and Mookherjee in their study on 'Poverty Alleviation Efforts of Panchayats in West Bengal'

We consistently found that targeting performance was poorer when the land distribution became less equal, the poor was less literate, when there were more low caste households, and local elections were less contested. From a normative standpoint, the opposite should have happened: poverty alleviation effort should have increased when there was greater poverty, illiteracy or inequality. This suggests that the outcomes reflected variations in government accountability owing to a decline in the political weight of the poor when they become more vulnerable (*Ibid*: 972).

Based on the above observations, we may infer that empowerment becomes weaker as the degree of vulnerability of the poor increases. As a result, it is only the better off among the poor who gain from the limited operation of empowerment.

Let us now look at the operational part of the above outcome, which is probably in the domain of the market forces. Under the IRDP, a household was provided assistance in terms of asset and/or services. The IRDP operated mainly up to the point of providing assistance. After that, the assisted household was expected to utilise the assistance to increase its income by operating in the market. Whether a household was able to increase its income depended on its socioeconomic position and entrepreneurial skill, and on the market. Not every assisted household could be expected to have the required entrepreneurial competencies, and the market generally favoured those who had more resources. It seems that empowerment operated up to the point of whom to assist. Here, empowerment could tilt the balance in favour of the less privileged. However, who should be given how much assistance—a decision taken by the panchayat leaders, and developmental and bank officials—was influenced by the market reality, which was not in favour of the less privileged poor. 'Betting on the strong among the poor' appears to be the operational policy here, ignoring the dictum of

*antyodaya*, even under the empowered situation. Thus, though empowerment was largely successful in checking the appropriation of assistance by the non-poor and enabling the poor to get assisted, in the allocation of assistance amount and deriving income from such assistance, the logic of market prevailed.

The process of empowerment itself has some inherent limitations. For instance, it may some times breed populism in the process of promoting participation. It was reported during the fieldwork that panchayat leaders used the IRDP assistance to nurture vote banks, which is natural under electoral politics. There was a tendency on the part of the panchayat members to please as many IRDP-assistance seekers as possible. This was reflected in the following trends in the distribution of IRDP assistance. First, though the IRDP envisaged the provision of assistance through a package of schemes to each family to enable it to cross the poverty line, generally only one scheme was financed to a beneficiary in each family. Second, for pleasing more people, with an eye on the vote bank, schemes requiring small funds were given priority. For instance, a scheme involving converting paddy to rice as an income generating activity, that requires little funding, alone accounted for 40.6 percent of the beneficiaries of the IRDP in Hooghly district during Seventh Five-Year Plan period (1985-90). Third, often the stipulated amount for a particular project was given to more than one assistance seeker by dividing the assistance amount for a scheme. This defeated the purpose of providing assistance. A poor household, with a fraction of an amount for a scheme, could not undertake the scheme because of shortage of funds. Obviously, such households failed to get any additional income from the IRDP assistance. Covering a large number of beneficiaries through thin spread of assistance suited not only the elected leaders (who could cultivate their vote banks), but also the officials (who could show a higher figure of households assisted under the IRDP).

Those who were relatively privileged among the poor and who derived benefits out of the IRDP were certain to support the Left Front government. The less privileged poor, who got a small amount as the IRDP assistance, would also support that government. Ironically, even those who failed to get any assistance would still support that government, as that is the channel to get the IRDP assistance. No wonder, the Left Front government in West Bengal has become the longest surviving democratically elected communist government primarily drawing on rural electorate. The process of empowerment, being a political process involving electoral politics, runs the risk of being misused for political patronage even without duly benefiting the poor.

## VII Conclusion

Our study suffers from some limitations. First, the findings of our study are drawn from a *post facto* quasi-experimental situation. Though the IRDP is considered as an extension and expansion of the SFDA programme, the former is different from the latter. Some of our findings may be a reflection of the differences between the two programmes. Findings from a full-fledged experimental study, controlling for the 'presence' and the 'absence' of empowerment and keeping other conditions identical, would have been more acceptable. Second, our attempt in defining 'empowerment' needs refinement, it now focuses more on form than on content. Third, we have defined poverty alleviation very narrowly—in terms of the implementation of anti-poverty programmes, our data relate to only two of several anti-poverty programmes. Fourth, our database is very small. Hence, the significance of our findings is limited.

In spite of these limitations, the trend delineated in our study finds echo in some other studies as well, giving credence to our conclusion that empowerment improved targeting performance of anti-poverty programmes, but, at the same time, relatively better off among the poor got higher benefit from anti-poverty programmes and this benefit reduced with increasing vulnerability of the poor. The limited operation of empowerment resulted in iniquitous poverty alleviation. If the limited operation of empowerment observed here is valid, it would be important to explore the corrective measures. Otherwise, the quest for growth-with-equity will remain elusive.

## Notes

This is the revised version of a paper presented at the XXVII All India Sociological Conference, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 26-28 December 2001. The IRDP data used in this paper are from a research project that I undertook under the sponsorship of Indian Council of Social Science Research, New Delhi. I am grateful to Professor B S Baviskar, Professor Victor S D'Souza and the anonymous referees for their valuable suggestions on an earlier version of this paper. The usual disclaimer applies.

- 1 We use the term 'poverty alleviation' in a very narrow sense here, to mean the implementation of anti-poverty programmes.
- 2 The All-India Rural Credit Review Committee, which suggested the SFDA programme, recommended the scheme for the small farmers only. However, the Planning Commission introduced a similar programme for the marginal farmers and agricultural labourers (MFAL). Thus, during the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1969-74) two separate programmes—SFDA and MFAL—were introduced as Central Sector Schemes in selected districts throughout the country. Under the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-79), these two programmes were merged.

- 3 The clientele of SFDA were small farmers (holding between 1.1 and 2 hectares), marginal farmers (holding up to 1 hectare), and agricultural labourers (the landless and earning more than 50 percent of their income from agriculture labour). The clientele of IRDP, on the other hand, were all those having income below a defined poverty line. Though we collected our IRDP data during 1992-93, for allowing a gestation period for income generation, we covered only those who received the IRDP assistance during Seventh Five-Year Plan (1985-90). Under this Plan, households having income below Rs 6,400 per annum were considered as living below the poverty line income.
- 4 In the districts where the SFDA programme was already in operation, the existing SFDA was converted into District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), a district-level office (similar to the SFDA) in charge of implementing the IRDP. In fact, in Hooghly district, the SFDA office was converted into the DRDA office by changing the signboard. The office premises and most of the supporting staff remained the same.
- 5 In West Bengal, defeating the Congress Party and in coalition with some smaller parties, the CPI (M) came to power for the first time in 1967. In 1968, this government was dismissed and President's rule was imposed on the state. However, it returned to power in 1969, and continued until 1972. The Congress was in power during the next five years. In 1977, the CPI (M)-dominated Left Front came to power, and it continues to rule the state.
- 6 We have collected data from a sample of non-beneficiaries, that is, those who in spite of being eligible did not get assistance. These data, which, for brevity, have not been presented here, show that, socioeconomic status-wise, the non-beneficiaries were worse off than the beneficiaries.
- 7 The 'higher' caste category includes all castes other than the scheduled castes, tribes and dominant castes. In the area of our study, we found two agricultural castes—Mahishya and Sadgope—to be the dominant castes. The 'lower' caste category includes those who belong to the scheduled castes and tribes. There were some Muslim households in our samples. For convenience, we have shown them as a separate category under caste. Education refers to the average number of years of schooling of all adult members of the household, and is categorised as 'higher', 'medium' and 'lower'. Similarly, occupational status refers to the occupational prestige score (Pareek and Trivedi 1974) of all adult members of the household, and is categorised as 'higher', 'medium' and 'lower'. As we focused on the household, the important dimension of gender does not figure in our data. It may be pointed out that invariably assistance was given in the name of head of the household, and head of the household almost always was a male member. Thus, the gender bias was obvious. In his case studies of two gram-panchayats in West Bengal, Webster (1989: 125) found that benefits of development programmes were not reaching women in general and poor women in particular.

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# **Traditional Institutions and Cultural Practices vis-à-vis Agrarian Mobilisation: The Case of Bhartiya Kisan Union**

*Gaurang R Sahay*

*Based on a study of the Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) and the farmer/peasant movements in western Uttar Pradesh (UP) during 1987-89, this paper deals with the relationship between traditional socio-cultural institutions and cultural practices on the one hand, and agrarian mobilisation, on the other. It is shown that, during 1987-89, when the BKU organised various successful agitations and movements against the state by mobilising the farmers/peasants of western UP on a large scale, its strategies of agrarian mobilisation were rooted in and modelled on the traditional sociocultural system of the local agrarian society. The BKU used the primordial institutions of caste and clan to organise and mobilise the farmers, it used traditional cultural practices or symbols to generate consciousness, sentiments and enthusiasm, and it used the traditional institution of panchayat for discussions and deliberations, and to address the farmers. The paper also shows that the BKU began declining when it entered electoral politics and started mobilising the farmers on political lines.*

In this paper, I have tried to delineate the relationship between traditional cultural practices and institutions of caste, clan and panchayat, on the one hand, and agrarian mobilisation, on the other, by making a case study of the Bhartiya Kisan Union (hereafter BKU). The BKU has been, from about 1986, the champion of the farmers or peasants of western Uttar Pradesh (hereafter UP). It is found that, during 1987-89, the BKU organised a number of highly successful movements or agitations against the state by successfully mobilising the farmers and effectively deploying the cultural practices and traditional institutions. In fact, its strategy of agrarian mobilisation was largely modelled upon the functioning of these practices and institutions.

## **Caste and Agrarian Mobilisation: A Review**

I have carried out this work against the background of a number of important empirical studies on the subject of caste and agrarian mobilisation.



The nature and content of this scholarship is rich and heterogeneous, and it provides us at least two different and, to an extent, contradictory theoretical understanding of the subject. On the one hand, a set of studies (see, for example, Moore Jr 1967, Singh 1974, Sarkar 1979, Omvedt 1981) strongly puts forward the view that the caste system has always obstructed the process of agrarian mobilisation for rural transformation in India.

Barrington Moore Jr (1967) argues that Indian peasants are deeply divided into castes, facing different life situations in the rural social formation. Hence, they cannot unite under the banner of a single leadership for agrarian or rural transformation. This apart, the institution of caste, through the process of ideological interpellation, makes subordinate or weaker castes docile and passive and generates primordial loyalties among them towards the dominant castes. That is why, he reasons, there have not been notable cases of peasant rebellion or movements in Indian history.

Rajendra Singh (1974), in his study of the land-grab movement in eastern UP, observes that the caste system created many problems for the movement. The movement failed to realise its objectives mainly because the participants—peasants and workers—were differentiated into different groups based on their caste affiliation. During the movement, Singh writes

The sharp polarisation of 'haves' and 'have-nots' could not take place as a large number of landless exterior castes like Chamars, Goriats and Bhatarts kept intact their primordial loyalties to the bigger landholders on whose farms they have been working for generations. The traditional relation of these Goriats and Bhatarts with the families of the landholders continued to exist and in most of the instances they leaked inside information of the plan and strategies of the movement (*Ibid* 61)

He further writes that the dominant castes in the villages 'exploited all along what Alavi calls "primordial loyalties" of Chamars, Goriats and Bhatarts and of their kin and clan members who were in their opposite camp. Primordial loyalties and caste loyalties transcended the class situation. This enabled the big farmers to defeat the grabbers everywhere' (*Ibid* 68).

Omvedt (1981) also finds the caste system to be an impediment in the process of agrarian consolidation and mobilisation. She argues that in Indian rural society it is almost impossible to mobilise people in a movement from across caste lines for social change or transformation. To quote her

The existing class/caste complex also provides fertile ground for the capitalist farmers to use casteism to appeal their kin among the middle peasants and labourers, to divide the rural semi-proletariat, and to attack its dalit and adivasi sections (and their women) who are often the most militant. While 'atrocities against Harijans' are occurring throughout India, it is precisely in the more capitalistically developed areas, where the general class-caste structure described above is most fully present, that they are taking the most widespread forms with even poor and middle peasant caste Hindus sometimes participating in attacks on dalits on a mass basis (*Ibid.* A-157)

K K Sarkar (1979) also holds somewhat similar views. He argues that there was a lack of collective effort and unity among the peasants and workers who participated in the Kakdwip Tebhaga movement. This happened mainly because 'the social system of Kakdwip itself had certain peculiarities unfavourable for the growth of organisation of the peasants at least in its initial stage' (*Ibid.* 473)

On the other hand, some notable empirical contributions (see, for example, Shah 1974, Siddiqi 1978, Henningham 1982, Dhanagare 1983; Gupta 1997) demonstrate that there is no cognitive hiatus between caste and agrarian mobilisation. In fact, the institution of caste plays a significant role in organising and mobilising the farmers/peasants for agitation and movement. It provides a solid platform to the farmers/peasants for coming together for the realisation of their common goal. Ghanshyam Shah (1974) observes that, during Kheda and Bardoli Satyagrahas, caste and its organisations were used to bring about unity within and among various castes. In his study of the agrarian unrest in north India during 1918-32, M H Siddiqi finds that 'the existence of castes helped the peasant movement to proceed with greater cohesion and speed and that the supposed irreconcilability between class and caste did not exist in the rural society of Oudh' (1978: 214). In his study of peasant movements during 1920-50, D N Dhanagare (1983) argues that in some of the movements the institution of caste was successfully used to bring people together. Stephen Henningham (1982) also holds somewhat similar views vis-à-vis caste in his study of peasant movements in north Bihar during the early twentieth century. Dipankar Gupta (1997) argues that the emergence and development of the BKU in western UP is intimately related to the culture and tradition of Jats, a dominant caste of the area. To quote him

The BKU draws its sustenance from certain aspects of Jat culture and tradition while ignoring others. In addition, the fact that these cultural aspects came to the forefront was because they were in harmony with, and

thus encouraged by, actual social practices The Jat ethos of equality plays a very important role in understanding the character of the BKU (*Ibid* 2)

### **The Data**

The data for this paper have been accumulated primarily by observing the functioning of BKU and its agitations and movements Discussions with the BKU office-bearers as well as the farmers including its members, over various issues or themes of this paper also provided valuable insights This apart, my erstwhile colleagues and students at the Janta Vedic (PG) college, most of whom hail from the villages of Baghpat, Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts of western UP, provided me important information They also sensitised me to some of the issues axial to this paper The college where I worked till recently (the end of June 2004) is located in Baraut (Baghpat district) and surrounded by villages I have visited some of the villages from time to time and spent time among the farmers for this study My fieldwork in the villages of Baghpat district (Chhapraulī and Nirpada) and Muzaffarnagar district (Bhaju and Sisauli) started when Dipankar Gupta provided me an opportunity for assisting him in his work on the BKU and political life of the western UP farmers Later on, I conducted fieldwork in association with Stig Toft Madsen Both Gupta and Madsen have acknowledged these parts of my fieldwork in their respective works (see Gupta 1997, Lindberg and Madsen 2003)

### **Farmers/Peasants of Western Uttar Pradesh: An Introduction**

While dealing with the BKU-led agrarian mobilisation and movements in western UP, I have used the terms 'peasant' and 'farmer' interchangeably This may be intriguing, as in most sociological/anthropological studies, including the recent ones, the term 'peasant' denotes the socio-cultural life of agrarian community, whereas the term 'farmer' denotes its economic life Peasants have generally been conceptualised as sluggish, obstinate, traditional or parochial and backward-looking villagers who do not look beyond the 'bamboo hedge' Owing to these traits and their communitarian character, they are considered to be, more often than not, non-ideological and culturally indifferent to politics and the market economy

Theodor Shanin opines that

The political impact of the peasantry has been generally marked by its sociopolitical weakness The vertical segmentation of peasants into local communities, clans and groups and the differentiation of interests within

these communities themselves has made for difficulties in crystallising nationwide aims and symbols and developing national leadership and organisation which, in turn, has made for what we have called low 'class-ness' (1971: 255, see also Wolf 1969, Shanin 1972)

On the other hand, farmers are viewed as performers of economic roles in agrarian social formation. It is supposed that they themselves participate physically in farming, hire labour for farm work, use available agricultural technologies, techniques and machines, including the modern ones, and perform supervisory work. On account of these roles, farmers interact with the market and participate in politics to better their life-situations (see Gupta 1997: 25). Since the villagers who are involved in agriculture, particularly in western UP, act as both farmers and peasants, I think it is imperative to use the terms interchangeably in an inter-contextual way to make any headway in comprehending the BKU and its agrarian mobilisations and movements. It is peasant-farmers who form a union and launch movements against the state. Gupta rightly remarks, 'The terms peasants and farmers should be recast and placed in relation to each other. It would perhaps be less useful to consider either the peasant or the farmer in isolation, but rather in terms of inter-contextuality' (*Ibid.* 26).

UP is a large state, it is the largest in population and the second largest in area. Like other states, UP has been divided into changing number of districts which have been grouped into four regions—western, central, eastern and Bundelkhand—for the purpose of administration. The western region is further divided into northwest and southwest. The BKU and its influence are traditionally and primarily located in the western region, particularly in the northwest districts Baghpat, Bijnor, Bulandshahar, Ghaziabad, Meerut, Moradabad, Muzaffarnagar, Rampur and Saharanpur.

The people of UP are largely dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. On the basis of census figures, J. Lerche and R. Jeffery write, 'The state remains overwhelmingly agrarian. In 1992, 72 percent of the economically active population was engaged in agriculture. This core sector has done well, consistently registering growth rates in yields above all India rates between 1962-65 and 1992-95, at an apparently accelerating rate' (2003: 18). However, there is a regional variation so far as the development in agriculture in the state is concerned. In the western region of the state, more so in its northwest districts, development in agriculture is by far the most. In this context, Zoya Hasan writes that western UP 'experienced the largest increase in rural capital investment, processing and small-scale industries in the green revolution era. By virtually all indices of growth and modernisation, western UP

achieved considerable progress, and by the early 1980s this region was substantially ahead of others in the state' (1998: 88). There are many reasons for this: the durable arrangement of canal irrigation from the colonial times, less harsh taxation during the British rule, successful implementation of the post-Independence land-reforms programme (particularly, abolition of the *zamindari* system and consolidation of land-holdings), more equitable land-holdings or less landlord-dominated landowning pattern, early implementation and adoption of green revolution technologies, and more investment in the agriculture based industries (see Stokes 1978, Stone 1984, Lerche and Jeffery 2003).

In western UP, most of the households which cultivate land or are engaged in agriculture belong to the class of small peasants 'with an ownership average of about three acres of land' (Gupta 1997: 27). This does not mean that the remaining households constitute the class of landlords. In fact, there is hardly a landlord in the villages of western UP (see *Ibid*; Lerche and Jeffery 2003). In Bhaju (a village in Muzaffarnagar district), 526 households out of the total 1,019 own land; 219 (41.6 percent) of the total landowning households own not more than three acres of land, 248 households (47.4 percent) own more than three but not more than eight acres of land. In other words, 467 (89 percent) of the total landowning households own eight or less than eight acres of land in the village. There is no household in the village which owns more than nineteen acres of land. A good number of these landowning households are fairly large in size, consisting of more than one married couple (see Gupta 1997: Appendix IV). Gupta also writes that the biggest farmer in Chaprauli (the biggest block village in Baghpat district) 'has eighteen acres of land, but has also two adult sons with their families living off the same plot' (*Ibid*: 27). In Sisauli, a village in Muzaffarnagar district and headquarters of the BKU, there is hardly a household which owns more than twenty acres of land. Mahendra Singh Tikait (president of the BKU) of Sisauli village, who heads a household of five married couples and many children, has about sixteen acres of land.

The farmers of western UP mainly grow sugar cane and wheat. Many sugar mills in this area purchase sugar cane and pay the farmers through banks. Since most of the farmers own small size of land, they usually cultivate the crops themselves with their household labour. The farmers generally require less agricultural labour for the cultivation of sugar cane mainly because its harvesting period is about six months and they can harvest their crops themselves. The average farmer hires some labour to tie handfuls of sugar canes together so that they do not fall on the ground during the rainy season. This apart, some farmers require hired labour for sowing the sugar cane. However, the farmers require

more agricultural labour for the cultivation of wheat, because wheat harvesting is intensive, labour-consuming work and its period is quite short, that is, about a week. Therefore, most small farmers also hire agricultural labour for harvesting wheat.

Overall, the demand for agricultural labour in the villages of north-western UP is quite less, irregular and periodic. That is why, most of the landless labourers work outside their villages in the non-agricultural sectors, particularly in brick-kilns. In Bhaju (an interior village in Muzaffarnagar district), as Gupta writes, 246 out of 362 landless households derive income only from non-agricultural manual work for their livelihood. Most of the adult male members of these households work outside the village. The remaining 116 landless households do not get enough work in the village agriculture for their livelihood (*Ibid* 28-29). Gupta rightly argues that in the villages which are easily accessible and situated besides major trunk routes, such as Nirpura and Chaprauli, 'the tendency for the landless to seek work outside is far more pronounced' (*Ibid* 29). The fact that the farmers generally do not require much agricultural labour in the villages of northwestern UP does not mean that the farmers outnumber landless agricultural labourers. To quote Gupta, 'Both in Meerut and Muzaffarnagar districts, and indeed in all of western Uttar Pradesh, Harijans and Valmiki, who are overwhelmingly landless, outnumber Jats and Gurjars put together' (*Ibid* 30).

### Nature and Agenda of the BKU

Against the background of such an agrarian situation, the BKU came to northwestern UP after a gap of about six years of the formation of a peasant organisation having same name in 1980 in Andhra Pradesh. In December 1980, Shri C. Narayanswami Naidu, a veteran farmer-leader of Andhra Pradesh, called a meeting of farmer leaders from different parts of the country in Hyderabad to discuss the burning issues facing the peasant society at large. The leaders decided to form a national level organisation of farmers to take care of their interests. They named the organisation as 'Indian Farmers Association' in English and 'Bhartiya Kisan Union' in Hindi. A peasant organisation having the same name was set up in Haryana in 1981 with Rao Harlal Singh of Kanjhawala village as its main leader. The BKU was set up in UP in 1986 with Mahendra Singh Tikait of Sisauli village (Muzaffarnagar district) as its sole leader, with no formal ties with any organisation bearing the same name (*Ibid* 31).

The BKU in UP was registered as a trade union under the Trade Union Act (see Lindberg and Madsen 2003: 204). It adopted an elaborate

constitution which clearly states that the union is a non-political and secular organisation of farmers, and its objective is to bring about socio-cultural and economic reform and development in rural community. According to this constitution, no person holding a post in a political party can hold a post in the managing committee of BKU, and none of its functionaries is allowed to hold a post in a political party. Though the constitution claims that the union represents the farmers of the country as a whole, it is largely a state-level association with its base in western UP, particularly in the districts of Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat, Meerut, Bijnor, Moradabad, Bulandshahar and Saharanpur. Mahendra Singh Tikait has been its President right from its inception.

Ostensibly, a farmer is supposed to pay Rs 5 for ordinary membership or Rs 50 for life membership, Rs 1 for each acre of land owned, and a donation of one kg of grain (see *Ibid* 194). According to the constitution, the BKU is a five-tiered organisation. At the village level, its members elect up to fifteen office bearers to the Village Committee. The office bearers choose from among themselves a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Joint Secretary, and Treasurer. All these office holders have to be life members. The President of each Village Committee and one representative from each village of a block constitute the Block Committee. They choose from among themselves one President, two Vice-Presidents, one Chief Minister, three Ministers, and one Treasurer. The President of each Block Committee and thirty-one representatives chosen from the members of Block Committees of a district constitute the District Committee. It will have one President, four Vice-Presidents, one Chief Minister, three Ministers and one Treasurer. The State Committee consists of only District Committee Presidents. They choose from among themselves one President, four Vice-Presidents, two Chief Ministers, three Ministers, one Treasurer and one Propaganda Minister. State Presidents and representatives of each state constitute the National Committee. Altogether, there can be 101 members of the National Executive. From among them, there will be one President, four Vice-Presidents, four Chief Ministers, eight Ministers, one Treasurer and one Propaganda Minister (see *Ibid* 195-96).

The BKU has hardly implemented the constitutional provisions to formalise itself through the creation of elected committees. It does not have any kind of records about the constitution of the committees and the election and selection of their members. The BKU President directly selects the office bearers. Even so, there rarely seems to be clarity and agreement among the people as to who have been selected or elected as the office bearers (see *Ibid* 205). As Gupta observes, the standard answer to 'Who are the office bearers of the BKU?' is "There is of

course Chaudhary Sahib (Tikait), then Harpal Singh is the general secretary, and then I ...” As each one said “and then I (*aur phir main*)” it was impossible to figure out who were the office-bearers’ (1997: 71)

Like a trade union or other contemporary farmers’ organisations in India, such as the Shetkari Sangathan and Karnataka Rajya Royta Sangh, the main issues on which the BKU has mobilised the farmers and launched movements are always related to the economics and profitability of farming for agrarian community. The most important issue on the BKU agenda is related to the rate, supply and distribution of electricity in the villages. The BKU has continuously pressed the state government for lower electricity rate for the villagers, particularly for those who use pump-sets to irrigate their farming land. It has been asking the government for enough and regular supply of electricity, and for its easy availability in the villages, primarily for irrigation purpose. Another important demand of the BKU is a higher minimum support-price for major crops, which are grown in western UP. The BKU has always favoured the continued high subsidies on chemical fertilisers, and has included this issue prominently in its charter of demands from time to time. It has consistently demanded a moratorium on the repayment of institutional farming debt and on the payment of electricity dues for an indefinite period. This apart, the BKU has been opposing the globalisation of trade, particularly free global trading of agricultural produces, it has been trying to convince the government to dissociate itself from the World Trade Organisation. To quote the BKU President ‘Dunkel Draft is like the East India Company and is set to grab the nation. No person on earth could take away the freedom of farmers and break their movement’ (*Indian Express*, New Delhi, 3 October 1993)

### **Traditional Institutions, Cultural Practices and the BKU**

The BKU began its career in UP as an informal, loosely structured mass-movement organisation of the Jat farmers of northwestern region of the state. In September 1986, Chaudhary Sukhbir Singh, head of Desh Khap (a clan organisation of Tomar Jats), called a meeting of his *khap* farmers in Baraut (Baghpat district) to protest against the state government’s decision to hike the farm electricity rates for pump-sets from Rs 22.50 to Rs 30.00 per-horsepower-per-month. It was an informal meeting patterned over the traditional institution of panchayat. The panchayat culminated into a one-day *dharna* at the Baraut powerhouse. Chaudhary Mahendra Singh Tikait (hereafter Ch. Tikait), head of the Balyan Khap and a close relative of Chaudhary Sukhbir Singh, was present in Baraut at that time. Ch. Tikait was quite impressed by the unity among the



farmers and their determination to fight for their cause. He took up this issue and the method of protest to organise agitations and movements in his own *khap* area in Muzaffarnagar district.

On 17 October 1986, Ch Tikait called a panchayat of his *khap* farmers in his village Sisauli. The panchayat was attended by about 3,000 Baliyan Jat farmers (see Rana 1994: 20). Ch Tikait, being the head of the *khap*, presided over the panchayat. The panchayat decided to set up a peasant organisation—and named it the BKU—to fight against the state for the just causes of the farmers. The farmers asked Ch Tikait to lead the BKU, for all practical purposes, he has been its sole leader right from its inception.

Although the BKU was registered as a union and a written constitution was adopted to legitimise it, Ch Tikait ran the union on informal lines patterned on the traditional *sarva khap* panchayat (an umbrella institution constituting all *khaps*), in his view, the farmers in western UP or elsewhere are deeply attached to their traditions and culture. Also, as noted by Gupta, 'there is nobody in the union who has the competence to set a formal organisational structure. Those who could, and who were attracted to the BKU were, however, not fully trusted by Tikait' (1997: 156).

Ch Tikait also holds a view that the formalisation of BKU would lead to the emergence of many self-centred leaders in it, and they would, like political leaders, struggle for power and utilise the community of farmers and their resources for their self-interest. In such a situation, maintaining the non-political character of BKU and sustaining its goal would become impossible. Thus, the BKU and its President decided to make the primordial institutions and cultural practices as the basis and method of agrarian mobilisation and organisation of protest and movement. The union used the institutions of caste, clan and panchayat to mobilise and organise the farmers in western UP. It used religious slogans, cultural figures, practices and rituals to generate consciousness, enthusiasm, and feeling of unity and equality among the farmers.

In western UP, particularly in the districts of Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Baghpat, Moradabad, Bijnor and Bulandshahar, where the BKU has a strong support base, the most numerous agricultural caste is Jat, followed by Gurjar. These are also the 'dominant castes' in this area. Both Jats and Gurjars belong to two different religious communities, namely, Hindu and Muslim: there are Hindu Jats and Muley Jats, and Hindu Gurjars and Muley Gurjars. They own most of the land in the villages. In his study of Bhaju (a village in Muzaffarnagar district), Gupta (*Ibid.* 204-06) found that there are altogether 1,119 households of about fifteen different castes. Jat is the most numerous caste, consisting of 401 households in

the village. All of them own land, whereas only 125 out of the remaining 718 households own land. More important, the Jats, who constituted only 35.8 percent of the total households in the village, owned 75 percent of the village land.

Jats and Gurjars are internally divided into various clan-groups that are known as *khaps* with different names (Desh Khap, Baliyan Khap, Gathwala Khap, Chaugama Khap, etc.) in the native language. The eldest male member of a particular family of the clan heads his *khap*, and he is called as *Chaudhary* of his *khap*. Generally, after a Chaudhary's demise, his eldest son (the eldest male member of his family, if he has no son) inherits his position. *Khap* members generally use the same title in their names. Villages constituting families of a *khap* are spatially situated close to each other. Jat *khap* villages are dominated by Jats of the same clan, and Gurjar *khap* villages, by Gurjars of the same clan. The two major clans of Jats, namely, Tomar and Baliyan, populate the area (Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat and Meerut districts) where the BKU is centred and has been the most influential. Tomar Jats and Baliyan Jats constitute Desh Khap and Baliyan Khap respectively, each of these *khaps* consists of eighty-four villages. Most of the Baliyan Khap villages are in Muzaffarnagar district, and Desh Khap villages, in Baghpat and Meerut districts. The third major Jat *khap* in this area is Gathwala Khap of Malik Jats that consists of fifty-four villages. All the *khaps*, small as well as big, enjoy equal position in the caste system, there being no internal hierarchy of any sort within the Jat or the Gurjar caste.

Like the Hindu Jat or Hindu Gurjar villages, there are the Muley Jat and Muley Gurjar villages, which generally do not consist of Hindu Jat or Hindu Gurjar families. There is hardly a village in western UP where both the Hindu Jats and Muley Jats or the Hindu Gurjars and Muley Gurjars inhabit side by side. However, there are many sociocultural and economic similarities between the Hindu Jats and the Muley Jats and between the Hindu Gurjars and the Muley Gurjars. Ch. Tikait used the common features of both communities to make the union strong and popular among the farmers of western UP.

Before the formation of the BKU in western UP, the institution of *khap* and its *chaudhary* had not been effective in controlling and directing the life and behaviour patterns of clan members. The BKU revived this institution and utilised it to propagate the nature and objectives of the union among the farmers of western UP. As the *chaudhary* of Baliyan Khap, Ch. Tikait had natural relations with *chaudharys* of other *khaps*. He tried his best to convince them that the BKU was determined to solve the problems of the farming community, particularly by opposing the unjust and unjustified decisions of the state. He urged them to

make other farmers of their respective *khaps* realise the relevance of the BKU for their own welfare. When Ch Tikait started receiving positive response from such meetings, he, in February 1987, called a general meeting of *khap chaudharys* in his own village, Sisauli. In that meeting, they decided to tour the villages of Muzaffarnagar, Meerut and Baghpat districts for propagating the nature and objectives of the BKU among the farmers.

Ch. Tikait toured many Jat villages in western UP, met village *pradhans* (elected heads of village panchayat), local caste and community leaders and other prominent members of the villages, and urged them to associate themselves with the BKU. In the villages, he addressed a general panchayat of the farmers, appealed them to participate in the BKU programmes, and asked them to set up village committees in their villages. From May to July 1987, Ch Tikait addressed about 230 *kisan* panchayats. The farmers in large numbers, ranging from 10,000 to 30,000, attended each panchayat (Rana 1994: 66). During the next three months the same year, he addressed another 60 *kisan* panchayats in different villages (*Ibid*: 70).

Ch. Tikait used the traditional institution of panchayat to organise and pattern the BKU meetings. There is a general belief that the institution of panchayat has religious sanctity, it is considered a gift of god to humankind for resolving the mundane affairs of human society. The person who presides over the panchayat is regarded as a person of high moral character endowed with the godly wisdom. He encourages the participants to voice their ideas and opinions, listens to them, respects their disagreements, and takes decisions by considering the ideas and opinions of other participants. His decisions are considered to be final and, therefore, binding on all and irrevocable.

In the villages, Ch Tikait always asks a local farmer to preside over the panchayat. The person who presides may belong to any agricultural caste or community. Many BKU panchayats have been presided over by Muslim farmers. Though any participant or farmer is free to present his views in the BKU panchayat, it is mainly addressed by *khap chaudharys*, local caste leaders and village *pradhans*. Lindberg and Madsen rightly observe that

BKU meetings are patterned on the panchayat. All senior males of the farmers' castes in the area deliberate on a loosely defined and ever-shifting agenda in an informal but often protracted manner, with a minimum of procedural rules. Disagreement is openly voiced, but consensual decisions are preferred to voting. The panchayats vary in size, and it is rarely clear what constitutes a quorum (2003: 206).

Like the traditional panchayat, a BKU panchayat is structured in such a way that all the farmers participating in it feel at home and respected. They are given opportunity to speak and their views are taken into account. No difference is observed between the leaders and other participants as regards seating arrangement. Generally, a small stage is prepared using a tractor-trolley or wooden cot to address the panchayat. Invariably, three persons are seen on the stage: Ch. Tikait, the person conducting the panchayat, and the speaker. After making their speeches, the speakers sit among the farmers. It is noteworthy that, during the Inter-State Farmers' Coordination meeting, which was held in Delhi on 2 September 1989, Ch. Tikait objected to the big rostrum set up for the meeting. He questioned the motives of Sharad Joshi, President of the Shetkari Sangathan, by asking 'Why such a big stage? It looks more like a political battlefield of those engaged in power politics' (*The times of India*, Delhi, 3 October 1989). Eventually, he dissociated himself from this meeting, and it was split into two opposing camps (Rana 1994: 132).

Ch. Tikait used the traditional concept of *khap-chaudhary* to gain the confidence and faith of the farmers. He never presented himself as a leader of a formal registered union before the farmers, but as a *chaudhary* of his farming community. As he reasons, the farmers do not trust a *neta* (leader), whom they see as power mongering to realise his self-interest, whereas a *chaudhary* is believed to be acting for the well-being of his community or *khap*. The traditions of clan-community make the farmers believe in the pristine sanctity of *khap-chaudharyship*. A *khap chaudhary* is held in high esteem because he is considered to be a person of high moral character. M. C. Pradhan quotes the following resolution passed by the Baliyan Jats in their *khap* panchayat on 12 May 1941: "We will work with our body, heart and soul under the leadership of our *chaudhary* for the good of our *khap*. Towards this end, the *chaudhary* has the right even to demand our lives" (1966: 179). M. S. Rana also notes, 'According to the *khap* panchayat system the *chaudhary* of a *khap* panchayat enjoys supreme powers. His fiat runs through all villages of the *khap*' (1994: 41). Though a *chaudhary* is taken to be the unquestioned head of his *khap* and his decisions are viewed as binding on his community, he is supposed to follow the wishes of his clan members and the mandate granted to him by the conventions and traditions of the *khap* panchayat.

Ch. Tikait used this time-tested concept of *khap chaudhary* to project his leadership of the BKU among the farmers. It proved to be extremely good for the BKU and brought wonderful results in terms of the mobilisation and organisation of farmers under the banner of the BKU. The farmers believe in the words of Ch. Tikait because he lives a life of a

common western UP farmer. Like most of the farmers, he is not educated. He presents his views in the local dialect. He is always conscious of his culture and tradition. He wears homespun cotton clothes (knee-deep *dhoti* and *kurta*, and Gandhi *topi*) and locally made shoes. His food is very simple, and it is made up of *roti* (bread), *dal* (pulse), *ghee* (clarified butter), *gud* (jaggery) and milk. Like other villagers, he smokes *hookah* (a type of smoking-pipe). All this has generated a feeling among the farmers that the BKU President, Ch Tikait is their *chaudhary* and is one among them.

The BKU and Ch Tikait used local cultural practices and symbols to arouse consciousness, enthusiasm, feeling of brotherhood and dedication among the farmers. The BKU farmers always shout religious chants like 'Allah-O-Akbar' and 'Har Har Mahadev' during the panchayats and agitations. The BKU meetings always conclude with these chants; all speeches end with these chants. Such a cultural practice, observed as a rule, generates a feeling of brotherhood among the farmers irrespective of their religious identity.

The BKU uses cultural or religious figures to name the sites where it organises agitations or movements. During the Meerut agitation, the union named the sites as 'Ram Garh' and 'Hanuman Garh' to convey the message that they, like Ram and Hanuman, are fighting with full commitment and dedication against injustice and evil rule. Such chants and naming generate religiosity among the farmers towards the BKU agendas and programmes. This apart, Ch Tikait always refers to the cultural or religious teachings in the course of his speech or discussion with the farmers. Some of his general comments are 'Have faith in the almighty. He would help us through the struggle. Since god is with us, we would emerge victorious. We are fighting a *dharmyudh*. God will take care of our problems' (quoted in Rana 1994: 49).

Ch Tikait has all the reverence for the sacred ritual of *yajna* (sacrificial fire), quite popular in western UP. During the long agitations, such as the Meerut and Rajabpur agitations, the BKU performed *yajnas* every morning with all solemnity at the agitation site. *Yajna* is an old cultural practice meant to purify the environment and to have sanctifying effect upon human thought and action. It also symbolises truth. There is a popular belief that Sita came through the sacrificial fire to prove her fidelity and sexual purity. Following such a belief, Ch Tikait told the newspaper correspondents during the Delhi Boat Club rally on 25 October 1988: 'Let there be two pyres, place him [Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister] on one and I will sit on the other. Light the pyres. We believe that he who is truthful cannot be affected by fire' (quoted in Gupta 1997: 59).

For such cultural meanings and sanctifying effects, Ch Tikait lights a *ghee* (clarified butter) flame before he goes for a serious thinking over a problem. Such a flame also burns continuously in the BKU office in Sisauli in memory of those who have lost their lives during the agitations (*Ibid*). The BKU is so much guided by the culture and traditions of the local community that Ch. Tikait generally expresses his feelings in religious terms. He often claims that his inspiration to be active in the BKU is religious in character, he says that it is god 'who told him to fight for the cause of cultivators. On many occasions he has said that his fight is a *dharmyudh*, or religious war, or even for a just moral order' (*Ibid* 60). However, such religious expressions did not detract the secular character of BKU. The BKU agitation has been frequently presided over by Muslim farmers, Muslim religious leaders like Sayyad Ahmad Bukhari (the present Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Delhi) have addressed its big panchayats.

*Hookah* is not just a traditional smoking instrument for the farmers in western UP, it is also a cultural instrument that symbolises *bhaichara* (brotherhood). The persons who share the same *hookah* are believed to be united with each other based on the idea of brotherhood. Generally, in the villages of western UP, the persons belonging to the same caste get together regularly and share a *hookah*. Gupta observes that members of a cultivating caste, such as the Jat, do not mind sharing a *hookah* with other cultivating castes like the Tyagi, Rawa or Gurjar. The villagers generally say that 'to smoke a *hookah* alone is a sign of misfortune, but to smoke a *hookah* in a panchayat or gathering is a sign of good fortune' (*Ibid* 47). The BKU used this cultural instrument in its panchayats or agitations to arouse the feeling of brotherhood among the farmers of different social classes. In the BKU panchayat, it is always possible to see the farmers in groups sharing the same *hookah* by turns. Many newspapers and magazines have published photographs of the BKU farmers and their *chaudhary* sharing a *hookah* during the panchayats and agitations.

There is another cultural instrument in western UP, known as *rana-singha*, which is traditionally used to spread a message. The BKU blew it to spread messages and announcements during the panchayats and agitations. Thus, the BKU reiterates its sensitivity to the age-old tradition and culture of the local community.

### **The BKU and Agrarian Mobilisations and Movements**

The BKU strategy of using the primordial institutions of caste, clan and panchayat and the elements of traditional culture for agrarian mobili-

sation and movement has proved to be quite effective. It mobilised the farmers in large numbers and organised many massive movements during 1987-89. Its primary demand during this period related to the withdrawal of state government's decision to hike the farm-electricity rate from Rs 22.50 to Rs 30 per-horsepower-per-month. Its demand to roll back the hike got a ring of urgency because the farmers in western UP were facing a drought situation in 1987-88. The BKU called a panchayat of the farmers on 3 January 1987 in Sisauli and passed a resolution to *gherao* Karmukhera (a township in Muzaffarnagar district) powerhouse for four days (from 27 January 1987) to press its demands. An estimated fifty thousand farmers/peasants participated in this agitation and staged a successful *gherao* at the powerhouse (*Ibid* 32). This successful protest was widely reported in the newspapers and it helped the BKU and Ch. Tikait achieve national prominence. On the concluding day, Ch. Tikait handed over a charter of demands to the Muzaffarnagar district magistrate with an ultimatum of one month.

In the meantime, Ch. Tikait, being aware of the government's apathy towards the farmers, asked the *khap chaudharys* to assemble in Sisauli for a discussion on the future course of action. The *khap chaudharys* jointly toured the villages of Muzaffarnagar, Baghpat and Meerut districts and appealed to the farmers to assemble again at Karmukhera powerhouse for a demonstration on 1 March 1987. During the period of ultimatum, the state government did not initiate any step to make the BKU rescind its decision. On the scheduled date, the farmers, in large numbers, started coming to the powerhouse. By noon, the number swelled up to one lakh (Rana 1994: 62). All arrangements made by the district administration to control and manage the situation were of no avail. To control the violent farmers the police opened fire, killing two persons and injuring many. In retaliation, the BKU farmers killed a police officer and set the powerhouse on fire.

After this incident, the state government paid serious attention to the demands of BKU. It constituted a three-member cabinet committee to negotiate with the BKU. The Union told the committee that, if its charter of demands were not implemented without any precondition by the end of March, it would stage a demonstration in Shamli (an old and important town in Muzaffarnagar district) on 1 April 1987. Meanwhile, the state government accepted the main demand of the Union, that is, a total rollback of the hike in farm-electricity rate with certain conditions. The government's decision brought about a needed confidence among the farmers, but the BKU did not suspend its plan to stage a demonstration, as the hike in the farm-electricity rate was not withdrawn unconditionally. This time more than a lakh farmers participated in the demons-

tration (*Ibid* 65) A meeting of the farmers held at the demonstration site was presided over by a local Muslim farmer and addressed by the *chaudharys* of various *khaps* and many non-political leaders, including the farmer leaders Sharad Joshi of Maharashtra and Balbir Singh of Punjab In the evening, Ch Tikait handed over a charter of demands to the district magistrate and called off the demonstration

After this successful demonstration of the BKU's influence and popularity among the farmers of western UP, Ch Tikait extensively toured the villages and appealed to the farmers to associate with the BKU and to constitute the ground-level committees in their own villages The then Chief Minister of UP, Bih Bahadur Singh of the Congress party, also realised the growing influence of the BKU and Ch Tikait among the farmers of western UP To win over the trust and sentiments of the farmers in his favour, he came to Sisauli to address them on 11 August 1987 The BKU neither received nor welcomed the Chief Minister He addressed a large gathering of farmers and promised them that his government would fulfil the reasonable demands of the BKU within a month Ch Tikait, in his address, asked the Chief Minister to take an extra month to implement the demands He was not satisfied by the Chief Minister's speech, and waited for his policy decisions for two months In the meantime, he toured many villages and mobilised the farmers in BKU's favour In the monthly panchayat on 17 October 1987, the BKU advised the farmers to stop paying government dues In retaliation, the government ordered the officials concerned to disconnect the power lines of defaulting farmers latest by 31 January 1988 Following this, the BKU called a panchayat to discuss this unanticipated decision of the government and, as a pre-emptive move, the panchayat unanimously decided to *gherao* the office of Meerut divisional commissioner on 27 January 1988

However, the *gherao* of the commissioner's office was initially planned to be a four-day affair, but after seeing the enthusiasm of the farmers, Ch Tikait decided to continue it for twenty-four days From the very first day of the agitation, the farmers started arriving in Meerut It was estimated that around two lakh farmers were always present in this agitation at the sit-in ground Ch Tikait asked a local Muslim farmer, Hafiz Khalil Ahmad, to preside over this massive panchayat In this movement, the female members of farming families also participated in noticeable numbers Along with men, they remained on the sit-in ground day and night, and shouted slogans and sang folk songs to express their sentiments and anger The BKU arranged food for the farmers from the surrounding villages Tractor was the main vehicle of transportation The BKU named the sit-in grounds as 'Hanuman Garh' and 'Ram Garh'



Many non-political leaders from different parts of the country, including Sharad Joshi, Swami Agnivesh and Sayyad Abdulah Bukhari (father of Sayyad Ahmad Bukhari) addressed the farmers. Ch Tikait did not ask or allow political leaders, including Ajit Singh, the most prominent political leader of western UP, to address the farmers.

As part of the agitation, Ch Tikait called for a non-violent rail- and road-blockade programme, which, however, resulted in violence. The police force started arresting the farmers involved in the blockade activity. In the ensuing conflict, the police opened fire on the farmer in Rajabpur, killing five farmers and injuring 108 (*Ibid* 86). In view of the police firing and the dictatorial attitude of the state government, Ch Tikait withdrew the agitation and appealed to the farmers to maintain peace and observe non-violence. Though this twenty-four day agitation was called off without any concrete achievement, it was quite significant in more senses than one. D N Dhanagare observes.

The communication of commands and instructions from the top to the rank and file of the BKU was unflinching. This would not have been possible without the farmers' fraternal solidarity, commitment to a cause and above all without their unflinching loyalty to their new leader Mahendra Singh Tikait. Such a noticeable peaceful protest dharna, unruffled by minor provocation from either police or administration, has been a rather new phenomenon in the annals of the peasant struggle in India [ ] The efficient organisation of the agitation in Meerut by BKU was reminiscent of the organisation of the Bardoli Satyagraha by Sardar Patel sixty years ago in south Gujarat (1988: 25).

On the concluding day of Meerut agitation, Ch Tikait declared that, on 1 March 1988 the Union will observe *Shahidi Diwas* (martyrs day) in Rajabpur in memory of the farmers killed in police firing during the Meerut agitation. He appealed to the farmers to participate in the programme in large numbers, and promised them that on this occasion he would announce further programme of the BKU. Over a lakh farmers assembled in Rajabpur on the scheduled date (see Gupta 1997: 33). The farmers named the panchayat place 'Tikait Nagar'. On sensing the enthusiasm and dedication of the farmers, Ch Tikait converted this occasion into a *satyagraha* (non-violent protest). He declared that, from 6 March 1988, the *satyagrahis* would court arrest in groups and would not seek bail unless the government orders a judicial inquiry into the Rajabpur incident and releases all the farmers arrested during the agitation. The *satyagraha* continued unabated. Every day some farmers courted arrest and went to the jail. Many non-political leaders, including Sayyad Ahmad Bukhari, addressed the agitating farmers. On 8 June 1988, the

government ordered a judicial inquiry into the incident and invited the BKU leaders for negotiations. After a series of negotiations, the BKU called a panchayat on 23 June 1988 and decided to withdraw their 110-day *satyagraha*. This *satyagraha* witnessed a massive mobilisation of the farmers in all 9,507 farmers courted arrest, five lost their lives and the police booked 90 farmers under the National Security Act (Rana 1994: 100)

A monthly panchayat of the BKU, held in Sisauli on 17 September 1988 decided to organise a rally of the farmers at New Delhi on 25 October 1988. The week-long rally at the Delhi Boat Club was a massive show of farmers' unified strength. Farmers from fourteen states of the country participated in this rally, the largest number of them came from western UP. Many farmer leaders from different parts of the country, representing different peasant organisations, addressed the rally. The negotiation between the farmer leaders led by Ch Tikait and the central government did not result in an agreement.

The week-long rally was well organised and peaceful. The BKU had appointed volunteers to manage the situation and to bring food and other such necessary items from western UP villages. Ch Tikait impressed the farmers and their leaders by his leadership quality. In honour of Ch Tikait, the farmer leaders presented him a five-foot high *hookah* (to symbolise the idea of fraternity, equality and unity in the peasant community of western UP) and a big green *pugree* (turban) (to acknowledge him as their main leader). The farmer leaders reiterated the BKU position that the farmers would not recognise the government unless it accepts its charter of demands. The objective of the BKU rally was to demonstrate peacefully before the central government the massive power of unified farming community that it achieved quite successfully.

After the Delhi Boat Club rally, the BKU farmers used to meet regularly in the monthly panchayat in Sisauli to take stock of the situation vis-à-vis the attitude and policy decisions of the government. In the meantime, on 2 May 1988, a Muslim girl by name Naiyma was abducted by some criminals in Sikri village under the jurisdiction of Bhopa police station in Muzaffarnagar district. For nearly two months, her mother requested the police repeatedly to trace Naiyma, but the police paid no attention to her request. She approached Ch Tikait for help. The BKU discussed her case in its monthly panchayat on 17 July 1989 and decided to *gherao* the Bhopa police station until Naiyma was recovered. On 2 August 1989, the BKU farmers assembled in large numbers on the bank of Ganga canal near the Bhopa police station. The BKU organised a panchayat there and reiterated its demands for the recovery of Naiyma and the arrest of her kidnappers. Sensing danger to the police station, the

police *lathicharged* the farmers and opened fire, killing two farmers and injuring many. To disrupt the BKU programme, the police also pushed three tractors of the farmers into the canal. Ch Tikait called a panchayat and directed the farmers to maintain peace and continue the agitation. He asked the state government to suspend police officer who ordered the firing and to unconditionally release the arrested farmers. On 10 August 1989, the police managed to recover the dead body of Naiyma. The farmers wrapped the dead body in the BKU flag and buried it amidst chanting '*Allah-O-Akbar*', '*Har Har Mahadev*' and '*Naiyma Bahan Amar Rahe*'. The agitation continued unabated. The farmers started courting arrest when they realised that the government was not paying serious attention to their demands. On 26 August 1999, Ch Tikait took some oaths to press the BKU demands, one of them was that he would not eat from a metal plate until the government accepts the BKU demands. The state government appointed two cabinet ministers, Hukum Singh and Narendra Singh, to negotiate with the BKU. After a serious negotiation between them and the BKU general secretary, Harpal Singh, the government agreed to accept most of the BKU's main demands and released Rs 3 lakhs as relief fund to Naiyma's mother. The BKU called off the 39-day agitation.

### Concluding Remarks

I would like to conclude this paper by pointing out that, after the Naiyma Lao Andolan or Bhopa agitation, the BKU started sliding downwards in terms of its influence and appeal among the farmers. After this agitation, the Union has not been able to mobilise the farmers in large numbers for a movement or agitation. This is because the BKU brought about some drastic changes in its policy or strategy of agrarian mobilisation. It began to take interest in electoral politics and started mobilising the farmers on political lines. It entered into an agreement with the Janata Dal and decided to support that party in the 1989 Legislative Assembly elections. It appealed to the farmers to vote for the Janata Dal candidates. The Janata Dal was voted to form the government in UP, with Mulayam Singh Yadav as its Chief Minister. After the formation of the government, Ch Tikait tried in vain to get the agreement implemented. Meanwhile, he started losing support among many caste segments of the farming community in western UP owing to his association with the Janata Dal. The Janata Dal president and the then state Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, sensed the situation and started using it to establish himself as a leader of the farmers in western UP. He refused to fulfil the promised demands of the BKU and ordered the police to use

force against the BKU functionaries when they agitate against the government. In order to control the BKU, the state police put its president, Ch. Tikait, behind the bar. This did not evoke a unified strong reaction from the farmers, which used to happen before the *Naiyma Lao Andolan*. When he was released from the jail, he met some national political leaders, invited the then Prime Minister (Chandrashekhar), Deputy Prime Minister (Devi Lal) and Chief Minister (Mulayam Singh Yadav) to address the farmers in Sisauli, and urged them to accept and implement the long-standing demands of the BKU. This decision of Ch. Tikait backfired and it was strongly opposed by the local political leaders. Ajit Singh, who has been, after the death of his father (Chaudhary Charan Singh), the undisputed leader of Jat farmers in western UP, toured the villages and vehemently opposed the politicisation of BKU. He criticised Ch. Tikait for his political act and ambition. He opined that Ch. Tikait has dishonoured the farmers of western UP by inviting the political leaders. The farmers responded positively to his remarks and many of them dissociated from the BKU.

The BKU continued its own politicisation by openly supporting the *Bhartiya Janata Party* in 1991 elections. In 1996, the BKU formed its own political outfit known as the *Bhartiya Kisan Kamgar Party* and participated in the elections. It miserably failed in its attempt to secure votes for its own candidates. In the 2002 Legislative Assembly elections, Om Prakash Chautala, President of the *National Lok Dal* and Chief Minister of Haryana, tried to create a political space for himself and his party through the BKU support. Recently, the BKU launched a political party—the *Bhartiya Kisan Dal*—and fielded many candidates in the constituencies of western UP in the Parliamentary elections of 2004. However, none of its candidates was successful and most of them even forfeited their deposits in areas where the BKU had successfully mobilised farmers or peasants in huge numbers for movements or agitations in the past.

Amidst all its politically oriented decisions and its interventions in national and state politics, the BKU lost its non-political and secular character and credibility among the farmers to a large extent. It lost the support of many segments of the farming community which are associated with different political parties and belong to different castes and religious communities. Its decision to support the *Bhartiya Janata Party* in the 1991 elections alienated the Muslim farmers (who constitute a major group in western UP) from its fold, and this alienation was reinforced after the demolition of the Babri mosque in Ayodhya in 1992. The Muslim farmers lost faith in the leadership of Ch. Tikait and they totally dissociated themselves from the Union. Its decision to invite

Mulayam Singh Yadav, Devi Lal and then Om Prakash Chautala to address the farmers created frustration and anger among the Jats of western UP who consider Ajit Singh—whose father Chaudhary Charan Singh, former Prime Minister of India, is traditionally revered—as their political leader and the only representative of their community. With all this, the BKU has almost become moribund

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## Discussion

### On 'Teaching/Learning Sociology'

'*SB* welcomes discussion on the articles published in its pages', says the Managing Editor (53 [1], January-April 2004 3), and Avijit Pathak seeks to 'initiate a meaningful debate' through his paper on 'Teaching/learning sociology' (53 [1], January-April 2004 41) So I am doubly tempted, for the only way to attain a shared sense of method is by examining each other's writings and ideas searchingly, publicly, continuously Pathak writes expansively, making far-reaching claims of a rather unorthodox sort I find his argument intelligible in the main, though its overall thrust gets somewhat misty<sup>1</sup> I agree with parts of what he says; here I limit myself to one or two of many of his steps that trouble me

I am puzzled by Pathak making 'modernity' the core through which, he says, sociology evolved in the West—and is taught and learned in India, indeed he asserts that sociology is a 'celebration of Eurocentric modernity' (p 38) Obviously our discipline, as an approach to the study of society, took shape in the West, in attempts at interpreting ongoing, lived experience, available, in their own milieu, to the early workers in the empirical study of society, but there was a powerful impulse to go beyond its necessarily parochial origins Durkheim wrote not only of the contrasting forms of division of labour, which Pathak notes, but also of 'the elementary forms of the religious life' (1912) and much else. Was Weber's corpus really limited to the bureaucratic form of domination? Amidst much else, he drew on a staggering range of societies, through space and time, to identify scores of concepts and relationships with which to analyse societies—terms which, in the main, are not notably Eurocentric (1968)

I suspect that a major difficulty is the following The social sciences, including sociology, are double faced on one side, these look for ways to understand 'what things are like', on the other, this understanding, it is hoped, would enable us to influence 'what things ought to be like' Different scholars adhere to one or the other stance in varying measure, and there is always room for misunderstanding between the two What drove Durkheim, Weber, and the other founding fathers of the field was the urge, in the first place, to understand the nature of society Pathak's own impulses are stronger on the transformative side, and therefore he interprets their work as a 'celebration of Eurocentric modernity'.

When, in 1959, I went to Cornell University, in the United States, to begin work for a PhD, and later to teach at University of Alberta in 1965, and McGill University in 1966, both in Canada, all three departments were combined departments of sociology and anthropology, engaged with wide ranges of societies. Industrial societies are constituted quite differently from peasant or tribal societies. Methods of research which work well with the former do not suit the latter, but students at Cornell did a year long course in research methods, principally qualitative in the first semester, quantitative in the second. I majored in anthropology but also did courses on Talcott Parsons, in social psychology, and in philosophy of social science. A mention of 'tradition/culture . . . as garbage' (p. 35) might have drawn an awkward silence: the *tradition* of scholarship itself was seen to be much too vital for any such notion. Yet one learned to take a critical stance on every tradition, scholarly or other, including the one that Pathak calls 'modernity'.

The term 'modernity' has meant different things to different people, and these meanings may be arrayed along several axes. Our author's special target is what he calls 'Eurocentric modernity'. Inherent in the latter, we are told, is an attitude of 'cognitive certainty', emerging from 'a *positivistic* perception of science' (emphasis Pathak's, p. 35f). After a phrase each on Bacon, Descartes, Freud, and Marx, comes the following: 'This certainty led to Fascism and concentration camps. Or, this led to what Foucault would call a "disciplinary society"'. Moreover, the arrogance of positivistic science also led to massive environmental crisis' (p. 36).

Pathak himself prefers a 'soft/humble modernity' with the implication, presumably, that 'science' too should be soft and humble. These qualities I much admire, but how would it work? Think of the following:

- 92 elements (in the Periodic Table of Elements) make up all terrestrial matter. Give or take a few neutrons, and you will get isotopes for these 92, and cyclotrons and the like can produce a few, quite unstable, transuranic elements.
- *All* religious traditions are human constructs.
- An actor ordinarily behaves with reference to one's own meanings, one's own definition of the situation.

How would these forthright statements be made 'soft and humble'? I am left with the uncomfortable feeling that Pathak underestimates the weight of the sceptical, critical stance in the scientific process. Scientific propositions do not emerge from, these do not result in, arrogant certainties.



These emerge rather from immersion in, and meticulous scrutiny of, all evidence regarded by the concerned scholars as pertinent. A scholar's claims are subject to public appraisal, in seminar presentations and the like, and to anonymous, stringent, reviews before appearing in journals—at least those that the world of scholarship takes seriously. After all this, nothing is established beyond challenge. Today's scientific truth may well be received by the next generation as history. A Lysenko's nostrums, backed by a Stalin's power, may pass as science—but only while the power lasts.

Yet, says Pathak, 'This certainty led to Fascism and concentration camps' (p. 36).<sup>1</sup> This is a strange assertion. The rise of fascism shattered Europe. Some three generations of scholars have looked for its roots assiduously. Should a sociologist pronounce on the theme so casually? If Pathak had cared to talk to M. K. Palat of the Centre for Historical Studies in his University, who has taught on Europe between the Wars for long years, he would have learned of the complex social, economic, and political processes which, in wide-ranging scholarly judgement, led to fascism.

There is more: 'the arrogance of positivistic science also led to massive environmental crisis'. A careful scholar could well have noted that the corpus of science provides the ground on which much technology is shaped, and when, driven by ambition or greed or both, certain technologies are applied recklessly, an environmental crisis can follow. Between 'science', a remote, ultimate cause, and 'environmental crisis', such a formulation would posit, there fall the strong shadows of technological development and the society's political and economic systems—which are the proximate, 'efficient' causes. In course of long centuries of analysis of the relationships between causes and consequences in all manner of phenomena, we have learned the imperative to attend to 'efficient' causes, intervening processes. To be sure, the influence of certain forces and events can continue to echo for a long time, but that influence is a matter for careful investigation, not dogmatic assertion.

I do not wish to labour the point. I would only say that Pathak has a fertile mind and interesting ideas. Perhaps we need to consider what kinds of practices, including rhetorical ones, are appropriate to this journal.

### Note

1 The mistiness may well have been intended, for Pathak is wary of 'cognitive certainty' (35).

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## Book Reviews

**A.K. Lal (ed.): *Social exclusion Essays in honour of Dr Bindeshwar Pathak* (2 Volumes) New Delhi Concept Publishing Company, 2003, xxviii + 1-338 and 339-617 pp., Rs 1,500 (set) (hb) ISBN 81-8069-052-0 (set)**

The two-volume book is a collection of forty-four articles written in honour of Dr Bindeshwar Pathak. It initiates a dialogue between the state and civil society, focusing on social exclusion. Covering historical and ideological dimensions, it addresses the issues of dalits and minorities and highlights their problems of social inequality and identity. The image of Indian society as a composite culture thus becomes problematic to understand why certain groups are excluded. Several vested interest groups work towards strengthening the process of exclusion. When the excluded groups question their hegemony, they are attacked, exploited and suppressed. The volumes also address the capitalistic model of development, and how it is not in the interest of marginalised sections. The role of the state is declining or getting eroded in the face of market forces, creating further inequalities in different spheres of life. The struggle of lower and intermediate castes in the economic, educational and political spheres has become a hurdle for the upper castes to maintain their supremacy. These volumes also suggest a comprehensive model to tackle the problems of scheduled castes.

It is interesting to observe that even in the post-independence period Indian society is not free from the exploitation of the *bahujans*. The volumes goad us to reflect upon the Marxian, Gandhian and Ambedkarian approaches to solve the complex problems of identity, equality and development. They raise issues concerning rural development and poverty alleviation, and note that those who have resources and skills are the real beneficiaries of governmental schemes. Unless there is a rational approach where people really participate in the schemes, the picture will not change. This requires organisational efforts by the people, and the support of non-governmental organisations. Rural poverty has led to mass migration of a large population to cities, leading to tensions in urban society and further aggravating urban problems. Therefore, there has to be proper regional planning to avoid such problems.

The volume urges social scientists in India to chalk out their own model of growth and development suited to their social and physical conditions, rather than depending upon western theories and models.

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Therefore, it becomes important to accept interdisciplinary approach to find solutions to the schemes discussed. I am sure these volumes are pathfinders in understanding the problems of social exclusion, in conceptualising social development, in emphasising the relevance and significance of participatory research for social action. In this context, Dr Bindeshwar Pathak's role in addressing the problems of the bottom-most sections in the areas of sanitation and public health is a noteworthy model.

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**Danielle Haase-Dubose, Mary E. John, Marcelle Marini, Rama Melkote and Susie Tharu (eds.): *French feminism: An Indian anthology*** (translated under the direction of Nirupama Rastogi) New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, 448 pp., Rs 350 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-9786-5

A volume on French feminism, more often than not, evokes expectations of readings of a particular kind of esoteric feminism that the uninformed normally associate it with. However, to be honest, I had no clue what to expect from a book entitled *French feminism: An Indian anthology*. The editors' explanation that, paradoxically, it was the lack of common ground—in spite of the larger histories and frames of references of twentieth century politics—that impelled a few of those who were present at an international conference to proceed on the making of two volumes (*French feminism*, for readers in India, and *Indian feminism*, for readers in France) makes better sense once one is through with the volume. For, indeed, the book literally opens a new world about the vibrancy and complexities of French feminism itself, and provides fresh resources, not available to most of those located in our regions, to understand gender.

The book is divided into eight sections: 'The Women's Liberation Movement in France', 'Women and Creativity', 'Writing History/Rewriting History', 'Integration/Exclusion: Race/Class/ Gender', 'Legal Bodies/Women's Bodies', 'Occupying/Capturing Political Space', 'Feminists Defetishize Theory', and 'Feminist Mappings'. Apart from a common introduction for two feminist locations, and an introduction by the French editors, each section is preceded by introductions which historically specify the context, and initiate the reader to the wider relevance of the issues that the readings raise.

Space will not permit an exhaustive review, but I would very much like to touch upon at least one theme that the reader raises—the *principle*

of liberty, which is addressed across the sections in sometimes a very different manner. The essay 'The Rights of Woman' is concerned with the contradictions of the 1789 Revolution, which wanted to make women into free individuals like men, and which, simultaneously at the political level, constituted them into a separate order, in the name of their sexed membership.

Even more interesting is Danielle Haase-Dubose's account of the *Ancient Regime* based on the concept of the 'equality of species' in the differences of the sexes that led to valorising the status of women in the seventeenth century. This article undoes the dominant concept of a linear progressivist history of women. In the first section on 'The Women's Liberation Movement in France' the reader is provided with rich details of the Movement and the distinct strands within it articulating different takes on what constitutes liberty. As Francois Picq puts it, 'Only a women's movement can focus attention on the intolerable situations created for women in our so-called "civilised" societies. Who will raise the questions of battered women, incest and sexual blackmail?'

Accounts of the role of lesbian feminism provide yet another frame to understand the contradictions of the principle of liberty, as the article on 'Lesbianism and Feminism' contends that while 'contemporary feminism has freed heterosexual pleasure from the control of religion and the state, it is far from having done as much for the love relationship between women'. Political lesbianism calls for, according to Monique Wittig's formulation, 'universalising the minority point of view'.

To return to the principle of liberty as enshrined in the French Constitution, yet another challenge to the idea of liberty arises from the growing visibility of non-white, non-Christian French citizens. The conflict apparently stems from the principle of an indivisible, secular, democratic and social republic, as specified in Article 1 of the French Constitution, founded on equality before the law of all citizens without any distinction of origin, race or religion. The case of the exclusion of young Muslim girls wearing the veils in secular schools is only a recent and not so invisible issue even in the Indian media. Ghaiss Jasser's article 'The Twin Evils of the Veil' reveals the French ambivalence related to the universal which is at the origin of secularism but is also a pretext to make French specificities the measure of absolute values. This is but one instance (readers would find many in the book) which is of great comparative value to the study of the politics of feminism, liberalism and secularism in India.

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**Dinaz Mirchandani:** *Educational theories, policies and reforms in India Graduates in perspective* Delhi Publication Division, University of Delhi, 2003, viii + 151 pp , Rs 400 (hb) ISBN 81-85695-36-9

This book, the revised version of Dinaz Mirchandani's PhD thesis prepared under the supervision of the late Professor M.S.A. Rao, examines the system of education, focusing on function of non-professional graduate degrees in the labour market. The findings, reiterating the influence of socioeconomic background on the quality of educational institutions attended and on the educational, occupational and income achievements, corroborate the major works in the area.

The book is noteworthy for the fairly comprehensive appraisal of the different theoretical perspectives on the role of education in determining differential occupational allocations and incomes. Mirchandani emphasises the fact that education has been assigned an unduly important productive role. The major thrust of educational planning and policies presumes that education leads to productivity, develops manpower required for the economy, and contributes to economic development. Disapproving of the emphasis on economic theories, which has resulted in serious lacunae in educational planning, Mirchandani pleads for a holistic treatment of the subject, with due importance to the economic, sociological and psychological variables.

To achieve her objective, Mirchandani makes use of a stratified, disproportionate, random sample of 200 male graduates from a population of 1,133 male graduates of the University of Delhi in the year 1970. Though the research was undertaken in the 1970s, she attempts to relate the situation to later research and the current educational and employment scenario.

Mirchandani points to the persistence of 'cumulative linkages and internal relationships between socioeconomic backgrounds, the quality of educational institutions attended, and the occupational status and incomes attained' (p. 87). She upholds the theory that the socioeconomic inequalities are being perpetuated by the educational system, and indicates a fairly strong relationship between socioeconomic background and the type of schools and, later, the quality of colleges attended. Furthermore, she maintains that the quality of educational institutions attended becomes a crucial segmenting force and a stepping-stone to high income and high status. The employers' use of education as a screening device and the preference for the better qualified for jobs available are also underscored. Besides, the over-qualification phenomenon is strongly endorsed as increasing educational increments in general.

education do not always increase job productivity or enhance job performance

It has also been observed that, apart from quantified factors like the amount of education acquired, demand and supply of labour, rate-of-return on education, etc., qualitative factors like status, hierarchy in the school and college system, type of degree, intensity of job-hunt, employee recruitment practices, contact, significant other's influence, etc. also have a considerable effect on occupational status and incomes earned

Mirchandani concludes with a discussion on the various programmes—non-formal education, adult literacy, remedial instruction, etc.—initiated to reduce inequalities. Aware of 'the hierarchy of educational institutions reflecting and perpetuating inequality' (p. 114), she advocates that education be 'more democratised and (made) equally available to all, in practice' (p. 115), so that the disadvantages to educational, occupational and income achievements accruing from poor socioeconomic backgrounds may be overcome

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**Dinesh Sharma (ed.): *Childhood, family, and sociocultural change in India. Reinterpreting The inner world*** (with a Foreword by Uwé P. Gielen) New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, xvix + 171 pp., Rs 445 (hb) ISBN 019-566460-4

Sudhir Kakar's *The inner world: A psychoanalytic study of childhood and society in India*, originally published in 1978, is a pioneering work on psychological anthropology in India. This work presents a meta-narrative of Indian (primarily male Hindu) childhood development and modal personality structure in the traditional high caste joint family. Over the years, the work has been the subject of both critical acclaim and scathing criticism. In the volume under review, Dinesh Sharma reassesses the central themes of Kakar's work in the light of more recent empirical anthropological and psychological studies of male and female children, their caretakers and other family members from different castes and rural/urban backgrounds in India. The contributors offer a more nuanced reading (or rereading) of Kakar's work in the background of contemporary socioeconomic and cultural changes.

The volume begins with a comprehensive Introduction by Sharma on ethnographic and psychological studies on Indian childhood. This is

followed by an essay of his own observations on child-caretaker interactions in a village on the outskirts of Delhi. The third essay is a summary reading of the central themes of Kakar's writings by Ashok Nagpal. Subsequently, Roopnarine and Suppal examine the family roles of the Indian father and other caregivers in childhood socialisation. Steve Derne expounds on 'fits and 'inconsistencies' between culture, family structure and psyche in Hindu India. In addition to an essay in which Kakar defends his position, the concluding chapter is a free-flowing interview with the psychoanalyst in which he dwells on diverse themes, ranging from the changing identities of women in modern India to his more recent professional interests and projects.

The psychoanalytic and anthropological perspectives on child-rearing pose a methodological conundrum: Which is the most effective way of gaining access to childhood? Is it through empirical observation of children or through the adult transference in psychoanalysis? One of the main methodological shortcomings of *The inner world* is the absence of systematically controlled observational and interview data derived from representative samples of children and their caretakers. Childhood is constructed from adult clinical data. Unlike the psychoanalytic method, the contributors base their findings on micro-level ethnographic studies. This approach highlights the strengths and exposes the weaknesses of Kakar's work.

The backdrop of *The inner world* is a predominantly agrarian social structure and slower pace of social change. Currently, the seesaw of tradition and modernity is creating new notions of childhood, motherhood and fatherhood through changes in the family environment, especially women's employment. Kakar's concept of maternal enthrallment (the lifelong emotional dependence of the Hindu male on his mother) is the central issue of controversy between the psychoanalytic and anthropological views of Indian childhood. Empirical observations of adult-child interactions, even in the rural joint family, highlight the important role of the father and multiple caregivers in socialisation, which contests Kakar's exclusive focus on the mother-child dyad. In his observations of preschool children in a peri-urban village, Sharma discovers that the joint family, in its ideal form, is on the decline, the mother remains the central figure in socialisation during infancy, and the extended family is more instrumental in childcare. Based on ethnographic studies of families in Varanasi, Steve Derne contends that child rearing can be a highly instrumental activity, where mothers may be unresponsive to their infants' emotional needs. Maternal indulgence may be balanced by the presence of multiple surrogates who cater to the child's nurture. Rather



than emotional need, the mother may have more pragmatic motives for developing a close bond with her son, whose birth not only enhances her status in the affinal home, but also will look after her in her old age

Kakar's rendering of the father-son relationship is characterised by physical distance and emotional detachment. Roopnarine points out that while men and women may adhere to traditional ideological views on the household, division of labour and child care, in-home observational data show shifts in actual behaviour, highlighting greater male involvement in child-rearing, especially in urban middle-class India, though mothers remain primary caregivers. Greater intimacy between the couple and maternal employment outside the home are resulting in quasi-egalitarianism in domestic and childcare responsibilities undermining the traditional gender-based dichotomy of roles and responsibilities.

These findings do not imply a total rejection of Kakar's formulations on child-rearing practices. The empirical studies also validate some of his ideas. For instance, even in the context of maternal employment and the nuclear family, the mother remains the primary caregiver, at least during the first year of life. In his response, Kakar admits to a tendency of over-generalisation in *The inner world* deriving from an over-enthusiasm on his part to establish a fit between psyche, social structure, and cultural imagination. He avers that his aim was to paint the bigger picture, highlighting what is common and shared in Hindu childhood. He also admits to a more active role of the father in non-traditional families in changing India. Undoubtedly, child rearing is also being influenced by changes in family structure from typical joint to nuclear and many extended family configurations.

This volume is a useful contribution to the fields of developmental and cultural psychology, as it falls within the genre of studies on Indian socialisation and child-rearing practices. The contributors underscore the need for developmental and longitudinal studies on childhood and family processes in the light of sociocultural and economic changes. Most of the studies on Indian childhood have been based on observations of male children and adult men. More studies of female children would show up the gender differences in socialisation practices.

Instead of establishing fits and deviations between European/American theories and Indian findings, a comparison of child-rearing and parenting practices between India and other Asian countries like Japan, China and Thailand is suggested. Western theories and practices do not constitute the psychological standards. The need for more indigenous

approaches taking into account India's diverse population groups is reiterated

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**H.Y. Siddiqui:** *Social development in Indian subcontinent India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications, 2004, 296 pp, Rs 625 (hb) ISBN 81-7033-840-9

In this book, H Y Siddiqui compares social developmental concerns in three countries—namely, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh—that earlier were part of one nation. The analysis is mostly based on secondary sources—printed books, articles, various records/reports, and data from national/international agencies, governmental/non governmental sources and newspapers. The presentation here is more like a narrative explanation of what has happened in these countries in the name of development during the last five decades.

In the first two chapters, Siddiqui gives an overview of development and modernisation in these countries. Some conceptual and theoretical analysis of modernisation is done, various models of development and modernisation are discussed at length. According to Siddiqui, 'the indicators for measuring the level of social development is a matter of debate, but generally education, employment and income levels, expectation of life at birth, child mortality rates, maternal mortality rate, availability of safe drinking water and toilets, etc. are taken as important indicators of social development' (pp 11-12). He deals with social development of these countries in detail, and provides a comparative analysis. Apart from economic and political development, he examines the indicators of social development like health, education, nutrition, and the status of women. In the chapter on 'Search for a civil society', he examines the crucial role played by civil society organisations in these countries.

In the concluding chapter, Siddiqui states that,

in all the three countries, the processes of generating economic prosperity have inevitably created tensions at all levels of society. The elite has largely appropriated the benefit of economic development and the benefits have not been filtering down to all segments [ ] In the absence of opportunities for a large number of people (*poor and marginalised*) to

- participate in the process of economic development the ensuring tensions are inevitable and *bound to continue* (pp 236-37, emphasis added)

He ends the book with a pessimistic note

the central problem in pursuing social development is the distribution of power among the general members of the society. [ ] It remains an illusion to structure an economy, capable of providing, a basic economic level of well-being, freedom to participate in political affairs and a society free of oppressive hierarchy, in the countries under review (p 273)

Although the book is not an original contribution, as it is based neither on an empirical study nor on specific evidence, it will be useful reading material for all beginners of social development studies, serve as a reference book for teachers, NGO/civil society activists and researchers on the subject; and provide some insights to the planners and policy makers

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**J.N. Nanda:** *Religion and philosophy for modern youth* New Delhi. Concept Publishing House, 2003, 110 pp, Rs 180 (hb). ISBN 81-8069-013-X

The author attempts to invent a new philosophy that can facilitate the knitting together of the world as one family. According to him, from the last couple of centuries, modern science has taken over all branches of knowledge and left philosophy with inward interaction, so that it may continue to help nations as well as individuals with the agony and ecstasy of coexistence. The book is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 stresses the urgent need to refine the human gene to root-out violence and arrogance. The second chapter gives an account of chronology of philosophical ideas. The third chapter portrays the basics of religion that includes worship, theories of creation, deity and prayer, priest craft, religious obligation and virtuous life. The next three chapters discuss milestones in philosophy, applied philosophy, and the modern state. The last chapter shows the ways of pursuit of happiness and the 'New Mahayana', a pragmatic paradigm of the post-industrial and post-unipolar

world with the objective to eliminate strife between different religions, philosophies and political and economic policies

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**Jose Murickan, M.K. George, K.A. Emmanuel, Jose Boban and Prakash Pillai R.: *Development-induced displacement Case of Kerala*** Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications, 2003, 390 pp, Rs 650 (hb) ISBN 81-7033-813-1

The study of displacement and rehabilitation has assumed great importance in recent years in view of development-induced large-scale displacement. With liberalisation and globalisation, the incidence of displacement is expected to increase. It is well known that displacement is disruptive and painful, in the absence of appropriate and effective rehabilitation policy, it results in social disorder. The book under review attempts to understand the intricacies and implications of displacement caused by development projects.

The book is an outcome of a research study done in Kerala as part of a nationwide study initiated by the Indian Social Institute, New Delhi on development-induced displacement, resettlement and rehabilitation. It focuses on the nature, extent and consequences of displacement resulting from development projects in that state during the period 1951-1995. The main objective of the work is to 'raise national consciousness on the enormity of human suffering created by development projects through displacement' (p. 25). The authors of the book have collected abundant data on varied aspects of displacement, resettlement and rehabilitation.

The book consists of nine chapters. The first chapter contains a brief historical background of displacement in India, and an outline of the objectives, hypotheses and methodology of study. An overview of similar studies in India facilitated the authors to discern the general trend that 'the project authorities plan the financial and technical aspects meticulously, but make little effort to plan their resettlement' (p. 41). The authors, while adopting a unique type of methodology in their study, have questioned the utility of classical methodology in the Indian context.

The second chapter provides an overview of Kerala, and covers such important components as land-use pattern, and community- and human-development indicators. The next six chapters, based on empirical study,

provide primary data on the extent of land acquired, compensation provided, profile of projects and respondents, the process of land take-over, and resettlement and rehabilitation with reference to Kerala. The last chapter makes a case for a humane policy of land acquisition, displacement and rehabilitation.

In general, the book deals with two major sociologically important issues: the question of relevance of economic growth in the absence of social component, and the question of social suffering resulting from development-induced displacement without proper rehabilitation policy. It questions the logic of development projects that impoverish further the conditions of the poor. On the basis of their study, the authors argue that the marginalised communities are the most affected by development projects. They trace the source of their social suffering to the lack of sensitivity and human consideration for the victims of development, and most importantly, the absence of rehabilitation policy and laws. The book convincingly argues that the 'most dehumanising in the whole process of land acquisition is the denial of the right of the dispossessed to participate in the decision-making process' (p. 279). It stresses the importance of total rehabilitation comprising economic, sociocultural and psychological aspects.

The book is more descriptive and narrative than analytical. It appears that the authors have taken a one-sided view of the problem. This may be due to the involvement of social activists in the study. They have repeatedly stressed the lacunae of government policies and laws of displacement and rehabilitation, and also the inhuman actions of the authorities. However, they fail to take cognisance of the significant role the displaced people themselves play in rehabilitation.

However, as a whole, the book makes valuable contribution to our understanding of development-induced displacement and rehabilitation. As such, it is a useful addition to the literature on sociology of displacement and rehabilitation.

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**Karuna Chanana:** *Interrogating women's education: Bounded visions, expanding horizons*. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2001, 382 pp., Rs 625 (hb) ISBN 81-7033-697-X

This anthology brings together nine pioneering essays in the field of gender studies in education previously published by Karuna Chanana.

over a period of two decades. It aims at uncovering patterns of inclusion-exclusion, separation and differentiation of women as students and as participants in the work force. It focuses on gendered processes of formal and informal socialisation within family and school as well as on organisations and professions as key sources of gender inequality. It also explores the paradoxes in the lives of educated women.

Given the vast social diversity and the uneven and unequal nature of educational expansion in India, Chanana rightly adopts both an historical and contextual approach. She rejects the concept of universal woman, looks at women in the regional context and emphasises diversity based on caste, tribe, religion, classes, and rural/urban contexts. The overall methodology is to explain women's educational and employment patterns in terms of historical contexts, sociocultural realities and government educational policies and practices. The general emphasis is on addressing issues and problems of urban middle-class women.

The book begins with a specially written introductory chapter which provides a wide-ranging discussion of feminist theoretical perspectives on gender and of issues and themes in women's education which frame the individual papers. The papers are organised in four sections. The first section, entitled 'Bounded Visions: Roots and Shoots', sets out the parameters of Chanana's studies in the area of women's education. The first paper in this section, 'Social Context of Women's Education in India 1921-47', provides her overall perspective for the study of women's education in the country. The second paper explores girls' schooling in pre-partition Punjab covering the period 1920-47. The paper describes the case of informal learning processes and obstacles to formal education during the period. This is followed by a paper on the post-partition educational situation of Punjabi Women belonging to refugee households now settled in Delhi. This is one of the most interesting chapters which provides insightful accounts of rebuilding of women's lives against traumatising experiences of partition and the breaking of caste and community cultures. Based on interviews with forty high-caste Punjabi women, the chapter shows the transformation of education from a 'naturally acquired' skill in women's lives to a key strategy of survival. Important questions are raised about obstacles to education's fulfilment as an agent of self-worth.

The second section, entitled 'Schooling, Access and Transition', explores issues pertaining to accessing education at the primary, secondary and higher levels of education for Indian women. Important issues of educational continuity, completion and professional aspiration are raised

by the next article, which examines gender disparities at the secondary and higher education stages

The third section is entitled 'Shifting Boundaries. Higher Education', and comprises two papers. The first provides a window into lives of women pursuing higher education in the 1960s, their mindsets and choices. The chapter highlights some important facts, and attempts a sociocultural explanation. It also brings out the caste and class bases of women's higher education and points out intra-gender disparities and regional variations. In terms of assessing its meaning for educated women, the article highlights the role of education as primarily a consumption luxury and not productive investment. It has fetched prestige and served as an avenue of good marital prospects for women. The second paper in this section provides a comparative perspective on accessing higher education for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities and women. Gender is demonstrated as a crosscutting variable across these major social categories.

The fourth and final section, entitled 'Expanding Horizons: Women Work', explores the impact of education on women in terms of employment prospects, and social and professional status. It uncovers realities of stereotyping and role conflict in working women's lives, and identifies the many constraints to the redefinition of gender roles in urban middle-class contexts.

Overall, the value of the essays in this volume lies in the several insights that are provided into the complex nature of the link between gendered sociocultural systems, the state, and women's educational and social status. In general, however, the essays adopt an eclectic approach in the selection of explanatory variables and provide at best partial understandings of a given situation. There is an element of repetitiveness in the collection, which could have been curtailed in the interests of brevity and clarity. One sorely misses a concluding chapter that would draw the varied significant historical strands and empirical findings together in a coherent whole. A critical re-look at the main findings of the essays in the light of relevant feminist perspectives, which were usefully and promisingly summarised in the introductory chapter, would have been a bonus. Furthermore, since her work ranges over a long stretch of time, Chanana was well placed to conduct an historical evaluation of women's educational development and its effects, as also to hypothesise on educational changes currently in vogue and the implications that they could possibly have for women's educational, employment and social status, and their empowerment.

Even as it is, the collection should be of substantive and inspirational value to students of sociology of education, and stimulate scholars engaged in women's studies to embark upon the as yet under-researched area of gender and education. The anthology makes a notable contribution by providing a useful backdrop and suggesting the terrain for further enquiry

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**Michael Richardson:** *The experience of culture* London Sage Publications, 2001, viii + 179 pp, £ 49 00 (hb). ISBN 0-7619-6650-1

In this book, Michael Richardson provides a critique of the modern western culture. He has undertaken an overambitious project which, at times, is a bit clumsy. However, he succeeds in arriving at significant conclusions for the present global situation.

In India, the idea of 'alternative' perspectives, especially those influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, was nearly drowned with the current debate for or against the project of globalisation. It survives, after the 'scientific temper' debate of 1970s, in the discourse on secularism, the most prominent contributors to it being Ashis Nandy and T.N. Madan. Several Third World social scientists have made significant contribution to the critique of modern western culture and to the search for alternative trajectories. However, Richardson's work almost completely ignores such contributions. For his final statements on various aspects, he invariably relies on the Critical theorists Theodor Adorno and Walter Benjamin.

Richardson is 'looking at the way culture unfolds in multifarious ways in modern life' (p vii). His aim is to 'engage culture phenomenologically, treating it as experience' (p viii). In the eleven chapters comprising the book, he examines various historically constituted binary oppositions such as self-other, nature-culture, mind-body, work-play, language-art, and reality-representation. He also evaluates different interpretations in the understanding of freedom, education, identity construction, and, finally, the role of technology, especially the electronic communication technologies.

Considering the vastness of the project undertaken by Richardson, it is surprising that he does not provide a plan of the book anywhere. There are no introductions to and conclusions for the chapters which could guide the reader in anticipating the argument and discussion. The



chapters are not divided into sections and subsections. The book appears to be written by an author-in-a-hurry.

Nevertheless, Richardson makes an important argument. He takes off with an analysis of 'self-other' relationship and argues that it is a contextual, dynamic, interactive and mutually enriching relationship, rather than the modern one of essential difference, separation and dominance such as the Occident-Orient construction. According to him,

otherness is a construction that emerges from our lived needs and so should take multifarious shapes. It is not an essence. All constitution of the Other is protean, subject to constant transformation and assuming a wide variety of different guises that can never be exhausted. This process should be viewed as a means of enrichment, devoted to the extension of communication and not serving the interests of control (p. 34)

This understanding is then applied to various other binary oppositions such as nature-culture, East-West, and work-play.

Richardson concludes that 'all cultures are characterised by universal features' and 'what we share is far greater than what divides us'. 'It is in this that a genuine experience of culture finds its realisation, allowing us to cross the myriad of boundaries that separate us from one another' (p. 171). These are important conclusions for the violent world, which claims to be shrinking every day into a 'global village', in which we live today and struggle to make it sustainable for future generations.

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**Mukul Sharma (ed.): *Improving people's lives: Lessons in empowerment from Asia*** New Delhi: Sage Publications in association with The Commonwealth Foundation, London, 2003, x + 208 pp., Rs 280 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-9603-6

This book is an outcome of the Commonwealth Foundation's Second NGO Documentation Fellowship Programme. The Programme provides for four NGO leaders from different regions of the world to share their experiences and exchange their ideas through publication. This Asian volume is second in the series; it documents the stories of four prominent NGOs in India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka respectively.

In his introduction and concluding remarks, the editor examines the polemics about the role of NGOs as an instrument of transformation. He also dwells on vexed issues like NGOs versus the state, the role of state, the NGO as a substitute to the state in certain contexts. These ruminations, however, remain residual. The primary objective of the volume is to narrate, share and exchange experiences, and so the book should be judged as for its style and content of storytelling.

The style of all the four contributors is lucid, with minimum jargons; content-wise it is copious and informative. The essays represent endeavours in documentation, and they all implicitly follow a common outline: genesis, development, organisational structure, *modus operandi*, achievements and limitations, along with the overall socioeconomic environment in which the NGOs operate. The NGOs, whose story the book captures, are: Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), in North Pakistan, The Women's Centre for Change (WCC), in the State of Penang, in the northern region of peninsular Malaysia, The Satyodaya Centre, in Kandy, in the Central Province of Sri Lanka, and Sahayi, in the southernmost district of Kerala.

The AKRSP in Pakistan covers an area of 74,200 sq km, and works with a scattered population of one million. With its endeavours, the poor communities have doubled their per capita income within a decade, and could stake their claims to common resources like forests and high pastures. The goal of WCC in Malaysia is to promote a violence-free society through equal and respectful gender relationship for all Malaysians, irrespective of their race and religion. The organisation focuses on women who are victims and survivors of violence. It provides immediate support services ranging from legal advice and emotional support to temporary shelter. It seeks to ensure complete democracy in managing its affairs through collective leadership rather than hierarchical formal structure. The leadership is never fixed and permanent, but continuously shifting and changing.

The Satyodaya Centre in Sri Lanka is active in the areas where migrant Tamil plantation workers are concentrated. Even today, the plantation workers continue to live in overcrowded and dilapidated line rooms. The economic programme apart, Satyodaya's endeavours in bridging the gap between the impoverished Tamil workers and Sinhala poor peasantry, in a hostile ethnic environment, is commendable. The Sahayi in Kerala provides need-based consultancy services to small and nascent grassroots organisations. It has combined humanism and professionalism in this capacity-building intervention. By humanism, the author means empathetic support, while professionalism is the technical expertise and

its application. The intervention of Sahay<sup>1</sup> boosted the confidence, enhanced the skills and facilitated the multidimensional growth of these small grassroots organisations.

The authors are sedulous, simple and effective in storytelling, which makes the book definitely inviting. Professionals in civil society groups, activists, and trainers and practitioners in the field of community organisation and social work are sure to benefit from reading it.

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**N.K. Das (ed.): *Culture, religion and philosophy: Critical studies in syncretism and inter-faith harmony*** Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2003, 374 pp., Rs 750 (hb) ISBN 81-7033-820-4

This book is a collection of twenty-three research essays on culture, religion and philosophy, focusing on the phenomenon of syncretism. The contributors present the cultural reality of syncretism in its conceptual perspective and theoretical dimension. The traditional social science models of Indian society and social change are replaced by a social-anthropological theoretical model founded on the universal applicability of the concept of syncretism, and with the support of empirical evidence.

In his introduction, the editor outlines the concept of syncretism, helping the reader to understand syncretism in a larger perspective. The history of the concept, both in sociological and social-anthropological literature, is characterised by a variety of perspectives, and this is evident in the various articles in the volume. Different religions and sects have experienced syncretism in India, as a result, the already pluralistic religious traditions in the country have become ever more culturally diversified. Nevertheless, a cultural unity is built through protracted interrelationships of the diverse religious and cultural traditions.

The articles in the volume provide a panorama of Indian philosophy and religion, each of them is a case study of a religion or philosophy, and how syncretism has affected it. Bijayananda Kar describes the confluence of Vedantism and Buddhism in Orissa, and gives a critical exposition of the philosophy of the Mahima Dharma. Anoop Chandola develops the context of 'contactism'—an important aspect of syncretism—by studying Buddhism and its development internationally. He concludes by observing that 'contactism' requires the contactor's perspective on others' interest. Suniti Kumar Pathak explains the assimilation of

ethnic groups of the Vedic era. She uses 'Atharva Veda' as a source material to study the multi-processing of structural fusion. K.G. Gurmurthy finds that the Filipino religion is a confluence of many cultures—the Indian, Chinese, Arabian and European. Mathieu Boisvert deals with the cultural parallelism of Sinhalese and Thai societies in a similar way.

Tribal religions are the worst affected and the most benefited from syncretism. K. S. Singh and T. Madhava Menon depict the case of tribal religions and the course of syncretism. Singh counters the argument that syncretism is not a concept of the past, but a reality of the present. Menon takes a different approach to syncretism when he discusses the tribalisation of Hinduism. Synthesis of Buddhism and Hinduism in the western Himalayas is the theme of Manis Kumar Raha's essay. Roy and Rizvi study the monotheistic Islam and the pluralistic Islamic traditions of northeastern India. S. A. A. Saheb brings out the Hindu-Muslim bond by studying Sufism in south India. The transformation of Rajbansis of north Bengal is a unique case of Hinduisation, which is dealt in a systematic way by R. Mukhopadhyay. Formation of a cult is also a form of syncretism, as is evident from the case of Olleks of Andhra (P. Venkata Rao). The Lingayats are a typical example of syncretism where various castes come together through the bond of a new religion (Suresh Patil). Jewish heritage and Hindu tradition are the basis of Syrian Christians of Kerala. The syncretism between these two communities is visible today in the cultural traits of Syrian Christians (Francis Kulirani). Social movements are an effective medium of syncretism, as evidenced by the Bhagath movement of Gujarat.

Tribal movements bring the tribal people closer to Hindu society and simultaneously allow dual religious tradition to coexist and flourish. The studies of Tamo Mibang, D. Sun, S. Das Gupta and A. Sarkar, and N. K. Das and B. K. Mohanta give different dimensions of syncretism of tribal culture with the indigenous society. All these papers narrate the syncretism of cultures in the womb of existing cultures, resulting in new cults, sects or religions.

This social anthropological volume presents the reader with a new dimension on religion. While the theoretical discussion on syncretism is interesting, one learns little by way of methodology for the analysis of syncretism. The case studies chosen by the editor cover a cross section of syncretism across the country. The book will be useful to all those interested in culture, religion, and philosophy.

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**Pauline Kolenda:** *Caste, marriage and inequality Studies from North and South India* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications, 2003, xvii + 460 pp., Rs 795 (hb). ISBN 81-7033-799-2

Pauline Kolenda is a distinguished anthropologist who has, for many decades, observed, documented and theorised on Indian social structure, notably on caste and kinship. Her fieldwork covers three regions: Khalapur district in Uttar Pradesh, Jaipur district in Rajasthan and Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu, and a range of castes 'untouchable' Chuhars, Rajputs, Brahmins, Nadars and so on, and includes comparative analysis of North and South. Her repertoire is prolific, temporally sensitive (with her several revisits to the field), and includes micro, intermediate and macro level research. Her hallmark has been meticulous attention to detail and a gradual and qualified build up of generalisations.

This volume contains twelve previously published articles (mostly from the 1980s and 1990s) and two new articles. The topics include aspects of family and marriage (levirate, equalising of marital kin through humour among the Chuhars, correlates of joint household patterns in rural Rajasthan) comparative kinship (images of women in weddings, sibling relations in north and south India), social change (changes in the discourse of caste, decline of child mortality in Uttar Pradesh, migration, occupational change and identity transformation in Tamil Nadu, circulation of landownership in Tamil Nadu, caste in India since independence). The comparisons of the distinct ethos of North and South India and the correlations with the regional kinship structures are excellent. The last two articles, both stimulating, are different from her usual empirically grounded style. 'How we should think about inequality' analyses significant writings on the topic within anthropology, sociology and philosophy in reflecting on the ideology of individualism in western society. 'Demonising dalits' takes on Vijay Prashad's book which identifies the Bhangis of Delhi as the main attackers of Sikhs following Indira Gandhi's assassination. Delving with a fine toothcomb into his sources, she argues that his accusation is not substantiated. All articles are insightful, not surprising for those who are familiar with Kolenda's work, though interpretations may vary. Together they are testimony to the range of her interests. Nevertheless, such clubbing entails weak thematic and methodological cohesiveness, heightened further by the stylistic dissimilarities of the articles. The later pieces are more reflexive. Some times, within an article, disparate styles struggle to

coexist Whether this is a problem or not depends on the reader's preference

Obviously, it is difficult to comment on all articles In the opening piece, she focuses on the intricacies of practice of levirate, in contrast to her earlier work focusing on its structure What and when are the deviations from the norm? What if the husband's brother is very young, or already married? What if he is the first husband's cousin and not a full brother (the former can sell her)? If she elopes with a lover, the affinal family can sell her But sale usually involves deception She gets alienated from her kin That's different from a bride-price marriage Kolenda develops the lived reality of levirate through the marital career of the widow Haradı who exercises considerable choice in selection of partner Kolenda argues that Haradı is not manipulating the rules for her own self-interest, but the norms themselves are somewhat flexible, not fully patriarchal and do allow some choice, which Haradı uses to her advantage while functioning within the code Kolenda's treatment of culture as 'constituted' and culture as 'lived' makes for a brilliant article.

Yet, her choice of terminology ('leviratic secondary remating') and her assertion that people themselves see levirate not as remarriage but as a permanent liaison is controversial Louis Dumont and others have rightly characterised the second marriage of a widow as secondary to her first marriage. The ceremony is simple, yet a ceremony is mandatory It implies community sanction. In customary law, this is a marriage, with ensuing rights for the woman and her offspring The full ritual of the first marriage—which, as Leela Dube has noted, signifies the sacralising of female sexuality—are absent in the second marriage However, this is a separate matter from legality In any case, categorising this second union minutely seems less important than understanding its structure and implications.

Kolenda's insistence here on terminological specificity is perhaps part of her general penchant for over-descriptive nomenclatures, leading to such excessively jargonised sentences as 'They do allow the widow choice of a mate if there is no dead husband's unmarried full brother' (p 30) Or, 'The oldest woman in the sample, a dead wife, was born in 1907' (p 107) Or, (as in Chapter 2) prefacing the many quotes from her field notes with reference numbers NQ1 up to NQ12 which interferes with the flow The internal system of numbering is neither necessary for nor intelligible to the reader. Likewise, on p 330, suddenly she introduces BWs, FBWs and other kinship short forms used nowhere else in the volume This over-technical style—a legacy from the old-style anthropology—collides with her reflexive intent, but also matches ill with the

casual slang phrases sometimes used (for example, 'It's wrong for mother and daughter to be producing babies at the same time') I found several inelegant translations 'superman' for the sacrificial '*purusha*', cosmic person/being is more accurate Pongal is more appropriately 'Tamil harvest festival' rather than 'South Indian ceremony of plenty' 'Yodelling' for *kuluvai* is too Europeanised, the technical term 'ululation' is available There are inconsistent spellings of Indian words (especially in the chapters on Travancore), erratic transliterations, a downright error on p. 329 (*tali* is always a yellow [turmeric] string and not red) and several printer's devils All in all, a stylistic hodgepodge

One almost wishes for a Srinivas-in-Stanford type of situation, where Kolenda discards her notes and writes from memory, a flavour-and-savour novel-like book set in Khalapur, Travancore and Jaipur That would be worth waiting for!

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**Rajesh Tandon and Ranjita Mohanty (eds.): *Does civil society matter? Governance in contemporary India*** New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, 378 pp, Price not mentioned (pb), ISBN 0-7619-9685-0

This book is an outcome of a multi-country research project jointly carried out by the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, United Kingdom As its title suggests, the book focuses on two interrelated concepts 'civil society' and 'governance' These two concepts assumed widespread currency in the last decades of the last century. This was occasioned by the fall of communism and military dictatorships in the Eastern Europe and the worldwide review of developmental efforts of half a century The fall of the communist regimes 'affirmed the desire and competency of ordinary people to define both political and social good and their terms of engagement with the state in pursuing these' Simultaneously, the World Bank and other UN agencies attributed the failures of social development to 'bad governance' and pleaded for the involvement of the 'civil society' We may recall that when President Marcos of the Philippines was ousted, the new government set up a Commission on 'Good Governance' Underlying these moves was the assumption that good governance can only be assured in a democratic polity and a liberal economy. Civil society was thus treated as a separate

'Third' sector, the state and the market being the other two. The political elite and the UN bureaucracy coined and propagated 'civil society' and 'governance'. It has become fashionable to use these terms though they mean different things to different people. Accepting these appellations without transforming them as social scientific concepts can only cause confusion. As concepts, they need to have a commonly agreed definition. For this, we need efforts both at the level of theory and empirical research. This book records the two sets of exercises carried out by a team of scholars, and deserves careful attention, though it has not succeeded in conceptualisation of the two terms.

'Civil society' emerged as a 'consensual concept', to use Neera Chandhoke's formulation in her essay in the book. By this, she hints at the lack of consensus regarding its definition. 'When a variety of dissimilar groups, such as international funding agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and institutions of the state on the one hand, and left liberals, trade unions and social movements, on the other, subscribe equally to the validity of the concept', it becomes consensual, according to her. As one who has witnessed several debates in the UN fora, I have observed this appellation used as a substitute for the NGOs!

The then Director-General of UNESCO, Professor Federico Mayor, opposed the use of this phrase by questioning: Does it mean that all other organisations are 'uncivil'? Some have also felt unease at the use of suffix 'society'. Interestingly, Chandhoke refers to the people belonging to the civil society as 'inhabitants'! Her own empirical essay focuses only on a movement led by a charismatic leader, and yet she offers this as an illustration of 'good governance' on the part of the civil society.

The book is divided into two sections. The first section deals with conceptual and theoretical debate, and the second section presents a series of case studies from India. Since the project leaders have provided no single paradigm, each of the empirical studies has chosen its own definition of the two concepts. As case studies, they read well, but as exemplifications of the two concepts, they are unsatisfactory. A good example is that of Chandhoke, who has contributed articles to both the sections. Her theoretical essay in the first section outlines the various controversies, and briefly states her position. However, her brilliantly done case study of an organisation in Chattisgarh hardly fits a 'civil society'/'governance' framework. Similarly, the report on the dalit movement in western Uttar Pradesh, by Sudha Pai and Ram Narayan, makes an interesting reading, but their obsession to provide the civil society framework offers yet another meaning of the concept. Forgetting that they were making a case for dalit association, they talk historically



of a 'civil (Hindu) society' (p 247) Had the authors been relieved of the burden of couching their script in the framework of civil society and governance, the special features of the case would have emerged more clearly A reader would also find it difficult to see merit in the inclusion of Bishnu Mohapatra's paper on the pavement dwellers of Mumbai which is captioned as 'A view from the subalterns' Does civil society mean 'dalits' or 'subalterns' only?

The first section suggests that the two concepts are still in the formative stage How can empirical studies in the second section use a non-existent conceptual framework? The two sections can make two independent books, as they do not relate each other Moreover, a careful analysis of the case studies, after sanitising them from superfluous theory of civil society, might have helped the editors in identifying the role of such voluntary agencies and movements in the emerging polity of India

Clearly the terms 'civil society' and 'good governance' are used profusely both by academics and the lay public, but there is still no consensus on their usage, and as such they remain words with different meanings to different people, rather than concepts with standardised connotations. The research project that has led to this publication is a creative response to the emerging concerns, but the outcome does not provide any sound paradigm.

'Civil society' and 'governance' are grey areas Much work needs to be done both at the theoretical and empirical levels From this angle, PRIA's initiative is welcome Those who are struggling to conceptualise the two concepts will find contentious points in the book

The title of the book raises a different kind of expectation, which remains unfulfilled as one completes its reading Of course, the editors of the book, who pose the question 'Does civil society matter?', may ask the reviewer 'Does a review matter?'

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**Ranjana Harish and V. Bharathi Harishankar (eds.): *Shakti Multi-disciplinary perspectives on women's empowerment in India*** Jaipur Rawat Publications, 2003, 327 pp Rs 595 (hb) ISBN 81-7033-788-7

The year 2001 was declared in India as the Year for Women's Empowerment, and a National Policy for Empowerment of Women (NPEW) was

formulated. As a consequence, women's empowerment became the hot topic for many seminars and conferences. A national seminar was organised by the Department of English, Gujarat University in December 2001 on '*Shakti* From Infringement to Empowerment' The present anthology brings together the papers presented at this seminar

*Shakti* is viewed as an Indian alternative to empowerment Whereas the term empowerment connotes gaining power from outside, *Shakti* stands for intrinsic strength or power Empowerment cannot be conferred upon or obtained from outside; it has to be developed from within The term empowerment connotes disempowerment of others, but the term *Shakti* connotes transformation of the individual from within Mythically, *Shakti* is an 'awe provoking image of goddess in her militant as well as benevolent manifestations', but for the writers to and the editors of this anthology 'it is more a metaphor of lived reality than a mythological term' (p 19), and accordingly they focus on the former

The volume includes twenty-three articles 'each context-specific and individualistic' (p 21) and presents multidisciplinary perspectives on women's empowerment in India. Besides, there is an Introduction by the editors and an Afterword The volume is divided into three sections Section 1, entitled 'From Reality to Representation', has only one article, by Jnanpith awardee Indira Goswami It focuses on her connection to the world of reality With the help of a thought-provoking personal narrative, she reveals how she overcame her personal grief and empowered herself to be a social crusader Throughout her autobiographical account, Goswami displays both compassion and sensitivity to the sorrows and pains of women This article acts as a bridge between Sections 2 and 3

Section 2 focuses on 'Realities' and deals with women in law, management and cannon-formation Two articles in this section need a special mention, and both appear under the sub-section on women and cannon formation. Neera Desai discusses the history of women's studies in India, and Shilpa Das describes how the text-books pass on gender impressions to children in their formative years, and how this leads to fixed constructs in the adult's way of thought and being Both these articles are of particular interest to the sociologists

Section 3, entitled '(Re)presentations', focuses on women and/in fine arts, history of literature and literature In this section, the article by Neeta Khurana detailing the marginalisation, both process and content, of Indian Maharanis, who are apparently empowered women, is insightful

The contributors to the anthology belong to diverse disciplines such as management, economics, commerce, law, languages, history, socio-

logy, and Sanskrit, but the major chunk of contributions is from the discipline of English. The book presents a kaleidoscopic view on women's empowerment. The concept of women's empowerment has not been dealt with in detail in the Introduction, which just provides a glimpse into the anthology. The multidisciplinary articles are arranged in sections and sub-sections intelligently. Handling an anthology of multidisciplinary contributions is not an easy task, the editors have managed it laudably. They have tried to establish a close nexus between life and art through explorations of realities and re-presentations with an overriding objective of 'gender sensitisation' and have succeeded in their venture. Gender sensitisation and social awareness are considered important for women's empowerment. The volume makes an interesting and thought-provoking reading.

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**Raymond Jamous:** *Kinship and rituals among the Meo of northern India. Locating sibling relationship* (Translated from the French by Nora Scott) (French studies in South Asian culture and studies) New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003, xiv + 198 pp, Rs 545 (hb) ISBN 0-19-566459-0

This book focuses on the Meo, a Muslim community, spread across the Mewat region covering the three states of Rajasthan, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. In it, Raymond Jamous examines the Meo kinship system, kinship terminology, marriage ceremonies and prestations, to present a comparative view of the same in relation to the north and south Indian kinship systems. He questions and reassesses the structural importance accorded to unilineal descent and affinity in comprehending kinship systems. Alternatively, he presents the brother-sister tie as the model of kinship, which unfolds the entire kinship system among the Meo.

Jamous begins his discussion by recounting the way he was incorporated within the community. As the key informant considered him as a 'brother', this relationship became the reference point for the rest in the community for establishing kinship with the author. In his capacity as the 'brother', Jamous discovered the importance of the married sister in ritual and social occasions among the Meo. He goes so far as to compare the ritual function of the married sister to that of a Brahmin priest in Hindu ceremonies. Even though gifts offered to the married sister were

in effect given to the wife-takers, the presentations were made to the sister and not to her husband or his family. Similarly, the rituals were performed by the sister and not by the affines. Hence, Jamous's central argument that, among the Meo, the relationship between the brother and the sister is not an extension of the relationship between the wife-givers and wife-takers, but a reinstatement of the brother-sister tie upon marriage.

To reiterate his position, Jamous argues that Meo kinship terminology is unlike the north Indian and Dravidian systems, where the corresponding distinctions between wife-givers and wife-takers, and consanguines and affines are built into the kinship vocabulary. The term *bhai* (brother) and *bahin* (sister) are used at two levels: 'the global level', where all persons are addressed as *bhai* and *bahin* across the ego's generation and irrespective of whether they form a part of the affines and consanguines, and 'the restricted level', where the use and meaning of the terms differ depending on the speaker's gender. For example, the male ego's sister's husband's sister is *bahin*, and the female ego's brother's wife's brother is *bhai*. Thus, in linking two brother-sister pairs, marriage establishes metasiblingship. Also, the female ego refers to her brother/brother's wife as well as her brother's wife's brother and his wife as *bhai/bhabhi*. The terms *bhai* and *bahin* transcend the distinction between consanguines and affines, just as the terms *bhai/bhabhi* refers to a couple as well as a pair.

In the case of same-sex siblings, the male ego's brother's wife is *bhabhi*, and her brother and sister are *behnoi* and *bhabhi* respectively. The brother of a *behnoi* is a *behnoi*, and the sister of a *bhabhi* is *bhabhi*. Likewise, the female ego's sister's husband is *jya*, a term which is also extended to his brother. *Jya*'s sister and her husband are *nanad* and *nandoi* respectively. Here, consanguineous siblings are opposed to affines, a sibling's spouse is an affinal kin and the husband-wife couples are distinguished from the brother-sister pairs. Jamous maintains that, even here, in the case of two brothers and two sisters, who distinguish between affines and consanguines, the sibling tie is central to the way the kinship terms are arranged. The siblings share the same point of view and can substitute one another in the kinship chain. Each time a brother-sister pair and a marriage occurs, the rest of the kinship structure unfolds according to this logic of 'pair equals couple'. Marriage, among the Meo, is an expression of metasiblingship as well as affinity. The whole set of brother/brother, brother/sister and sister/sister ties constitutes the basic cell for constructing the entire kinship structure of the Meo. Thus,

unlike south Indian kinship, kinship relations dominate the terminological order than vice versa

Jamous is critical of the western viewpoint, which considers the nuclear family as the 'quasi-universal and primordial unit of reference'. Meo kinship system, according to him, presents an alternative perspective on kinship. In advancing metasiblingship, the Meo system not only underplays the distinction between consanguines and affines, but also relativises filiation. In the process, hypergamy, a feature typical of north Indian kinship, is offset in the Meo system. While isogamy is ascertained in Dravidian kinship through the principle of affinity, the same is achieved among the Meo, at least at the global level, through metasiblingship, wherein the distinction between wife-takers and wife-givers is restricted between families, and not applicable at the group level.

Jamous, however, takes the ritual role of the married sister all too seriously, as he considers the ritual importance of the married sister to be an expression of her superior position. He seems to overlook the fact that the sister gains importance only upon marriage, which suggests the significance of marriage more than the position of women among the Meo. Without the realisation of the tie in marriage, the expression of the brother-sister relationship is not possible. Jamous's approach, therefore, is still contingent upon the kinship structure, though he does present the diachronic view of the same through a detailed analysis of the rituals that accompany the various rites of passage among the Meo.

The book has a clear theoretical purpose and is, therefore, an asset to the specialised reader. It lives up to its claim to present a new approach to the 'understanding of social facts that the structuralist perspective has not yet considered'. Yet, the approach is still structural! The book leaves one with a wish to know more about the practice of kinship and the social status of the married sister in everyday interaction: whether her ritual importance is commensurate with her secular position in society? Overall, the book is a thoroughly researched work in kinship studies and brings fresh insights to the conventional understanding of kinship in India.

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**Richard Pais:** *Scheduled castes A study in employment and social mobility* Mangalore Mangala Publications, 2004, x + 245 pp, Rs 350 (hb) ISBN 81-88685-02-X

This book examines the impact of protective discrimination in employment on and the consequent social mobility of scheduled castes (SCs) in Mangalore City. According to the author, the very employment of SCs in the public sphere signals the biggest sign of social mobility for them, as it implies freedom from the shackles of 'occupational fixity' imposed by the caste system. The book is rich with empirical insights pertaining to the theme of social mobility among the SCs. Dovetailing theory with empirical analysis, the author provides a detailed discussion of the theory of social stratification and mobility.

The leitmotif that runs throughout the book is that there has been a remarkable inter-generational mobility among the SCs as regards their occupation, and that the policy of reservation has played a pivotal role in this. The book proclaims that access to and utilisation of opportunities for modern education is a crucial factor in facilitating this social mobility. The author has been selective in studying employment as the engine of social mobility, because it is employment that provides livelihood, status and identity in society.

Although the author takes recourse to employment as the prime force behind social mobility, he does not rule out the possibility of other factors influencing it. While stressing employment as the major vehicle of social mobility, the study does not ignore such other factors such as education, migration, sanskritisation, unionisation, inter-caste marriage, industrialisation, transportation, communication etc. It is quite unambiguous in articulating the empirical observation that there is a 'constitutive correlation' between education and employment as also between employment and social mobility. Another noteworthy feature of the book is that it is not oblivious of the ongoing debate. Do all SCs benefit almost equally from the policy of reservation? Can they really think of meritocracy and struggle competitively without 'reservation'? Is their 'sponsored mobility' really bereft of any genuine concept of merit?

This book depicts the phenomenology of SCs of Mangalore: their ecstasy and agony, discrimination and disabilities, aspirations and achievements, employment and empowerment, odyssey and ordeal, and mobility and *modus vivendi*. As the nation is committed to the vision of an 'egalitarian society', it is sociologically imperative to examine how far such vision has been translated into action for transforming the life-

world of the SCs Richard Pias's book is a small but significant contribution towards such an examination

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**Rowena Robinson: *Christians of India*** New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003, 234 pp, Rs 300 (pb) ISBN 0-7619-9823-3

This sensitively written book has come on the shelf at a time when the issue of religious minorities has become a major player in both national politics and interpersonal relationships of people. In a broad framework, Rowena Robinson questions the Hindu hegemony leading to marginalisation of minorities not only in the public sphere but also in the intellectual tradition. In a specific sense, she argues for the legitimate place of Christianity on the Indian canvas. Navigating through the history of general neglect of Indian Christianity, she carves a niche of the Christians of India in the academic as also social discourse.

Robinson forcefully critiques the unilinear, ahistorical perspective and, more importantly, the vantage point from which Christianity in India is looked at. Evidently, the notions of accommodation, assimilation, syncretism, and forced conversions come under critical enquiry. Instead, she establishes, confirms and affirms the intertwining of Christian communities with regional cultures in the subcontinent. Christianity in India, therefore, is not to be treated as a single, homogeneous, undifferentiated category. The distinct permutations, variegations and guises are brought out by way of collating ethnographical and historical accounts of the many Christianities in India. The strands of plurality and polyvocality are cross-linked in a way that, despite the internal differentiation, Christianity in India acquires a distinctive character and identity of its own.

Robinson brings to the fore the dynamics of power and politics, motives and intentions, struggle and resistance in the different phases of conversion. The history of conquest and control, of state initiative, and of individual efforts of saints and missionaries, on the one hand, and the vulnerability of certain sections of the population as also the assertion of Hindu identity, on the other, all constitute the substratum in which the roots of conversion are enmeshed. What is clearly battered is the simplistic misconception that conversion is a response of the low-caste Hindus to raise their social position. The Syrian Christian provides a

case in point here. Conversion of low caste Hindus cannot be denied completely. Portuguese rule in Goa and the establishment of the Church encouraged the low-caste Hindus to adopt new occupations such as wine-selling and baking (the products of which were used in the sacrament of the mass in the church) in place of the polluting occupations that positioned them in the lowest rung of the caste hierarchy. In Robinson's words, 'Thus, for the upper castes conversion meant alignment with the rulers and the protection of their economic, social and ritual privileges. For the low-ranking, there may have been the expectation of the social mobility, for instance, though movement into non-traditional, pollution-neutral occupations opened up by the new regime' (p. 52). More interesting and significant is the fact that the Church itself emerged as the arena in which the elements of caste and class were consolidated. The processes and impact of establishment of churches in the lived lives of people, both in villages and in cities, is brought out candidly. Caste-based reservation of benches close to the altar in churches, of priesthood, and of special concessions in the church is common.

At another level, the discourse is based on the interplay between Christianity and other religions. Appreciably, there is considerable lending and borrowing between Christianity and other religions to an extent that it reconfigures them and gets reconfigured by them many times. Hindu goddesses, in some areas, are imbued with attributes of the Virgin Mary, as much as Virgin Mary is viewed as the 'benevolent mother of God and as powerful female divine embodying *shakti*' in Goa. The rituals associated with the principal events in the agricultural cycle bring together Christians and Hindus. The one theme that runs as an undercurrent throughout the text is that of indigenisation of Christianity. It is not always easy or even possible in several cultural situations to sort out critical elements of culture into those of Christianity and other religions including tribal religion.

The mention of integration alone does not complete the complex sociocultural matrix in which primarily Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, tribal and other religions exist, for the existence is marked by a strange interplay between conflict and coherence. The strife comes out most clearly in the case of the Mukkuvars. Robinson writes, 'The Mukkuvars demonise Hindu gods and goddesses, holding them responsible for a range of ills and misfortunes that the Catholics have to face. This was attributed partly to antagonistic social relations that the catholic fisher-folk have with the caste Hindu society' (p. 114). Again, the will of the Christian saints gets articulated by way of divine punishments that are executed through subordinate Hindu deities. In several cases, Hindu



deities are imbued with malignity and demonness while Christian deities are largely treated as benign and pure. The tension has roots, among others, in the state policies. The history of stress between Syrian Christians and caste Hindus has been traced to the colonial period. The policies of the administrators wrongly interfered with the system of exchange and joint celebration of Church and temple festivals that hitherto fostered cordiality and partnership between the two groups. The situation worsened over a period of time. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Syrian Christians and high caste Hindus began to engage in violent conflicts.

One may also mention at this juncture that the nature of convergence and divergence between religions is dynamic and ever-changing. The book brings out this aspect finely. Robinson explains that the services in the Church, the sermons and idea of prayer, concepts such as fest (feast) or *maata* (Mother Mary) are some of the issues that suffer from inattention for different reasons. Another dimension that would have been of vital interest and importance is that of the arts. It would be worthwhile to explore how Christian images are depicted in art forms and how local images are perceived and depicted by Christians. The Kalamkari folk painting of Jesus on the cover suggests great possibility of research in this direction.

This book is significant for researchers not merely because it fills in several gaps in knowledge about Christians of India, but also because it deals with the theme in a balanced and pragmatic way.

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**Sushma J. Varma and Radhika Seshan (eds.): *Fractured identity: The Indian diaspora in Canada*** Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2003, x + 261 pp., Rs 550 (hb) ISBN 81-7033-784-4

As the title of the book suggests, its contents are oriented towards debating the essential question of whether diasporic identity existing at a multitude of levels is fractured. It also attempts to delineate the varied ways in which this identity is manifested. This volume, centred on identity in relation to the Indian diaspora in Canada, unites a number of essays under the three sub-themes: the issues and theories pertaining to

the diaspora, diasporic communities, and the Punjabi community in Canada

In the first section, N Jayaram raises the question of identity and the place of culture in the life and living of Indian diasporics. According to him, 'the Canadian experience forms a unique facet and offers theoretically pregnant and methodically challenging insights' (p. 25). He draws attention to certain lacunae like ignorance of the study of reverse migration and the important linkages that the homeland has with its diaspora on both the governmental and individual levels. Since the Indian diaspora in Canada is not a homogenous entity, he suggests comparative approach to avoid the pitfalls of 'over-generalisation' (p. 41). Reflexivity also needs to be practiced to arrive at a correct perspective of the problem.

Brij Maharaj's paper discusses the Indian diaspora based in different geographical and time settings and belonging to varied classes. Drawing from his anthropological research, he uses a wide-focus lens to span the Indian diaspora in its indentured form in South Africa, the voluntary diasporic experiences of Indian traders in East Africa and the more well-heeled and professional Indian community in Canada. He queries if a pan-Indian identity exists amongst its diaspora.

Jayant Lele enquires the epistemological correctness of the term 'diaspora' and debates if it has led to fractured identities and multiple meanings. He argues that diasporic studies in general and the Indian diaspora in Canada have been studied by looking at history in a linear fashion and not in a dynamic manner. Hence, the hegemonic narratives see the light of day, while the critical issues lay buried and need 'to be excavated and interpreted with imaginative sensitivity towards the dynamics of history' (p. 68). Lele states that 'an opaque awareness of Hinduness' (p. 84) was prevalent amongst the Indians in Canada before the arrival of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad in the 1970s and its subsequent revitalisation in 1987 that manifested itself in the sprouting of temples and growing popularity of guru worship. Benedict Anderson's concept of 'long-distance nationalism' does not fully capture the unfolding of 'Hindutva', but a parallel can be drawn between the two by attributing the latter with some distinctly Indian features. Like Jayaram and Maharaj, Lele asks if an overarching Indian diaspora can be imagined. He answers this question by saying that at least a 'diasporic aesthetic' can be visualised by giving due importance to the study of the subaltern classes (a point made by Maharaj, too) and with the Indian diasporics in advanced countries building bridges of friendship and empathy with their brethren living in less fortunate conditions.

Santishree D. Pandit's write-up deals specifically with the Tamils in Toronto who identify themselves on the basis of language and culture rather than religion, as seen in Lele's essay where the community chose to identify itself primarily on religious lines. She interestingly likens them to a 'victim diaspora' striving for the establishment of an individual identity that is different from the larger Hindu identity.

The second section consists of a motley group of essays, each distinctly varied in its theme from the other. They seem to have been haphazardly grouped under the vague heading of 'diasporic communities'. The first paper in this section, by Chandrashekhar Bhat and Ajay Kumar Sahoo, focuses on the existence of transnational networks with specific reference to the Gujarati and Punjabi communities in Canada. The networking strategies of these two communities are situated in the larger context of the changes wrought by globalisation in the fields of transport, communication and information-sharing. According to the authors, the Punjabis and Gujaratis are on the verge of emerging as transnational communities due to their out-reach at the global level. Their nets render geographical boundaries meaningless and yet fall within the purview of international relations.

Vanaja Dhruvarajan describes and extrapolates the existent gaps in the minimal research undertaken on the second-generation Indian diaspora living in Canada. She observes that research is generally centred on the first-generation diasporics. One of the pertinent questions raised in this paper is, what is the manner in which the intersection of factors like gender, race and class affect the routine lives of the diasporics? This needs to be answered keeping in view the history of colonisation and imperialism that has touched the life histories of these second-generation diasporics in peripheral if not major ways.

Malathi Ramanathan discusses different women writers in her essay and poses a number of questions from the opposite side of the spectrum, that is, from the author's end rather than the subjects'. She attempts to discern the viewpoint through which the writers construct their literary perspective.

The third section includes writings on the Punjabi community settled in Canada. In the context of two villages, one each in India and Canada, Archana Verma debates the question of the outsider vs insider. She also touches upon the issue of networks. Raj Kumar Hans views the *gurudwara* as a tangible symbol of Sikh culture through which the diasporics attempt to anchor themselves in a foreign locale. This paper is an absorbing exploration of the dynamics of this religious site and the

central role it plays in knitting the community together as well as being an arena of dispute.

Paramjit Singh Judge focuses on the Punjabi elderly males in the two Canadian cities, namely, Toronto and Edmonton. He utilises the case-study method and demarcates the arenas of family situation, weather, work, pension, and social security and world of interaction to construct how these elderly men live their daily lives. Theoretical issues taking into account the Canadian national policy of multiculturalism are also discussed. Judge points out that the Punjabi elderly men make a substantial contribution to the Canadian economy and, hence, they should not be discriminated in being provided with social security and pension. They make themselves useful by working as farm labourers, acting as babysitters so that the parents can become productive members in the outside labour market. The Punjabi elderly women do a great deal of housework that often escapes attention and classification as productive labour. Most important, they have contributed by arresting the flow of western values and influences into the Punjabi families in Canada, thereby helping the retention of the Indian identity and value system.

This book is a concerted attempt to highlight the issues and debates, and the realities and blanks about the research on the Indian diaspora in Canada. It will be useful to scholars and academicians of diasporic studies, history and human geography.

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***Editorial Note:***

As a convention, *Sociological Bulletin* publishes articles and book reviews strictly in the chronological order in which they are received in their accepted version by the Editorial Office. The instant issue carries articles and book reviews received up to 01 July and 15 July 2004 respectively.

***Managing Editor***

## Books Received

(May - July 2004)

- Atal, Yogesh and Rajesh Misra (eds) 2004 *Understanding the social sphere The village and beyond* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications, 2004
- Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar 2004 *Caste, culture and hegemony Social dominance in colonial Bengal* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Chakraborti, Rajagopal Dhar 2004 *The greying of India Population ageing in the context of Asia* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Chandra, Pratyush, Anuradha Ghosh and Ravi Kumar (eds) 2004 *The politics of imperialism and counterstrategies* Delhi Aakar Books
- Chandra, Vinod (ed) 2003 *Construction and reconstruction of Indian youth* Lucknow Circle for Youth and Child Research Cooperation in India, in association with J N Post-Graduate College
- Dube, Saurabh (ed) 2004 *Postcolonial passages Contemporary history-writing on India* New Delhi Oxford University Press
- D'Cruz, Premilla 2004 *Family care in HIV/AIDS Exploring lived experience* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Goonesekere, Savitri (ed) 2004 *Violence, law and women's rights in South Asia* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Gupta, Surendra K (ed) 2004 *Emerging social science concerns Festschrift in honour of Professor Yogesh Atal* New Delhi Concept Publishing Company
- Jhunjhunwala, Bharat and Madhu Jhunjhunwala 2004 *Indian approach to women s empowerment* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications
- Langford, Jean M 2004 *Fluent bodies Ayurvedic remedies for postcolonial imbalance* New Delhi Oxford University Press
- Malešević, Siniša 2004 *The sociology of ethnicity* London Sage Publications
- Mukherji, Partha Nath and Chandan Sengupta (eds) 2004 *Indigeneity and universality in social science A South Asian response* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Nayar, Promod K 2004 *Virtual worlds Culture and politics in the age of cybertechnology* New Delhi Sage Publications
- Oliver, Paul 2004 *Writing your thesis* New Delhi Vistaar Publications
- Patel, Purushottam G 2004 *Reading acquisition in India Models of learning and dyslexia* (Research in applied linguistics Vol 6) New Delhi Sage Publications
- Pathi, Jaganath 2004 *Media and tribal development* New Delhi Concept Publishing Company
- Pawar, S N, J B Ambekar and D Shrikant (eds) 2004 *NGOs and development The Indian scenario* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications
- Shelat, Manisha Pathak 2004 *Communication for gender sensitization The value discussion approach* New Delhi Concept Publishing Company
- Sibeon, Roger 2004 *Rethinking social theory* London Sage Publications
- Siddiqui, H Y 2004 *Social development in Indian subcontinent India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications
- Singh, Yogendra 2004 *Ideology and theory in Indian sociology* Jaipur and New Delhi Rawat Publications
- Verma, Ravi K, Pertti J Pelto, Stephen L Schensul and Archana Joshi (eds) 2004 *Sexuality in the time of AIDS Contemporary perspectives from communities in India* New Delhi Sage Publications

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